

The Three Amigos – Chapter 12 – Tom, Dick or Harry

“I don’t want any Harry using my guns.” Clarence said, when he heard about Gary’s idea.

“I believe that the expression is Tom, Dick or Harry, Clarence,” Ron said.

“Yeah, but Gary is TOM and Dick is on our side, so I only object to Harry,” Clarence explained.

“Well relax Clarence, the only guy named Harry around here is on ‘the other side’,” Gary noted.

“That’s what I said,” Clarence insisted, “He can’t use either one of my guns.”

This was another of those “Who’s on First’ routines and Gary and Ron just stopped talking before Clarence really had them confused. The Council agreed with phase I of Gary’s idea, finding out who the best shooters were. They would only agree to implement the plan if 3 accomplished snipers and 3 good observers/marksmen were available. They agreed that the area from Cajon Junction to the Phelan turnoff was suitable for a running sniping attack but from that point on into Palmdale the country was too open. In those few miles, however where 138 snaked through the mountains, there were areas that Gary said were better than Thermopylae for holding back invaders. That was an understatement, especially if the observer used the M203 and took out the car. Highway 138 was extremely narrow in spots as it wound through the mountains.

The shots along the mountain road would run from a minimum 400 yards to as far as 700 yards. A couple of the tight spots were accessible from about 400 yards so they had a good chance of being able to attack a vehicle. The M72 was rated as effective to 200 meters on a stationary target and 165 meters on a moving target. The maximum range of the rocket was 1,000 meters. The M203 was rated as effective to 350 meters on an area target and 150 meters on a point target. The maximum range of the grenade was 400 meters. And remember, they didn’t have any mines. There was an alternative, assuming they went forward with the plan. The observer/marksmen could position himself along the road in front of the line of travel and the sniper could cover him.

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They got to the range around 10am and began to sort out who had rifle skills of the kind needed and who didn’t. Age seemed to have a real bearing on the question and David’s 4 boys came in 1 through 4 with Matt a close 5th. Darlene’s son was on the young side to participate in the contest. They worked at it for 3 hours and then called it a day. They practiced only with the M1A’s and the M16A3’s. The next day, Sunday, the boys were back on the range and three hours later the 2 snipers and the 2 observer/marksmen were identified. The twins, Justin and Jason would be the snipers and the other two boys, Josh and Jesse the marksmen. In a heart wrenching decision, The Three Amigos

agreed to let Josh and Jesse each fire 1 LAW's Rocket to get accustomed to using the weapon. They used a stationary target at 200 meters to simulate an oncoming car. Both boys hit the target. From that point on, the boys were on the range each day burning up the match ammo. By the end of February, they were extremely proficient with their assigned weapons. Ron and Gary's rifles were loaned to the boys to use and Clarence was told they didn't want his damned weapons anyway because this was going to be a 'hairy' mission. (groan)

"Hey Gar-Bear, what was the name of the British Prime Minister who favored wearing women's clothing?" Ron asked.

"That's a dumb question Ron, everyone knows who that was," Gary replied.

"I don't," Clarence said.

Gary made a couple of quick hand signs to Ron who confirmed that Gary knew the answer. They both told Clarence to think about it. The Council was satisfied with the boys' marksmanship and they reluctantly approved the plan to snipe the gangsters if they turned up 138. To make any such plan work, they needed very good intel and they contacted Johnny and explained what they had in mind.

"Those boys are awful young for a mission like this," Johnny suggested.

"Jesse is almost 18 the twins almost 19 and Josh is almost 20," David said.

"So, they're 17, 18 and 19," Johnny summarized. "Well, David, you're their father, so if you approve, I'll just stay out of it. What do you fellas have in mind to do with these guys?"

"Jesse and Josh are outstanding shots out to 600 meters and can put everything in a silhouette out to 800 meters," Gary explained. "Let me show you on this topographical map. We hit them first just as they come into Mormon Rocks, right here. That will be a LAW attack and sniping attack combined. We can snipe effectively from here, here and here," he said pointing to the map. "Right here, we can do a second LAW/sniping attack and stop them again. And right here before they get to Phelan, we can use the third and final LAW Rocket. The boys will take some of Dave's mountain bikes to move from spot to spot. Dave must have 2 dozen of those bikes at least."

"And after that?" Johnny asked.

"The boys will come back here and we'll wait for the attack," Gary replied. "We're going to need pretty good intel to pull this off, can you help out?"

"I can do better than that," Johnny said, "The Army hasn't been able to use their Apaches very effectively in Berdoo. But with them strung out on 138, assuming they go that way, the Army would have a turkey shoot. Don't stop them at Mormon Rocks, fellas. Let

them get to that second spot and stop them there. The Army can come in from the rear and just walk their way to the front.”

“What about if they go up the pass?” Ron asked.

“I’ll fill them in on what you’re going to do and see if they can get some people to do the same thing in the pass,” Johnny replied.

“We’ll start writing up the Purple Heart recommendations right now,” Ron said.

“They haven’t been wounded Ron,” Johnny said, “Aren’t you a little premature? And besides, I don’t believe there is an equivalent Medal to the Purple Heart for civilians”

“Premature? Nah, they’ll get a scratch or something like Kerry did,” Ron replied, “But if there is no equivalent, I’ll just forget it. Say, what did Kerry get his Bronze Star for, maybe they can do that?”

“Pulled some guy out of a river, Ron,” Johnny said, “There aren’t any rivers up there in the mountains.”

“Yeah and besides, they’re civilians, right?” Ron responded.

“Right,” Gary said.

After Johnny left, The Three Amigos continued to visit.

“Well, if Johnny can get the Army to attack those gangsters with Apache helicopters,” Clarence said, “I don’t see the point in sending David’s boys out to risk their butts.”

“Quit bitching Clarence,” Ron said, “They aren’t taking your rifles.”

“That’s not my point Ron,” Clarence protested, “If the Army can block the Cajon Pass, why can’t they block 138?”

“That’s so obvious a question Clarence that it never occurred to me, but you’re right,” Gary agreed, “If the Army can block Cajon pass, they ought to handle 138 and the boys could stay home.”

Gary picked up the phone and dialed the Sheriff’s Department.

“Sheriff’s Department,” a Deputy answered.

“Is Sergeant Johnny Jones back yet?” Gary asked.

“Just a moment and I’ll connect you,” the Deputy said.

“Sergeant Jones,” Johnny answered.

“Gary Olsen, Johnny,” Gary said, “We just came up with a question. If the Army can block Cajon Pass, why can’t they block 138?”

“No reason,” Johnny said, “I just figured it was something you fellas wanted to do.”

“The plan yes,” Gary said, “But we were only going to do it because we figured the Army couldn’t or wouldn’t. But since you can get them to block the Cajon Pass, we think they should handle the whole thing.”

“Gary I said I’d see if they could cover the Cajon Pass, not that they would,” Johnny pointed out. “But you have a point. I’ll ask them to cover both spots. It is a pretty fair idea.”

“When will you know for sure whether or not they’ll do it?” Gary asked.

“Gary, I’d expect that they’ll say they’ll look into it and either do it or not and never let us know one way or the other,” Johnny explained.

“You are a big help,” Gary commented.

“I’m just telling you how it is Gary,” Johnny replied, “The Army is the Army and they don’t like civilians telling them what to do. I was going to backdoor it through a Master Sergeant I know. There was not going to be anything official in the works at all.”

“What’s the Army so busy doing that they can’t handle this problem?” Gary asked.

“Gary, this is an open line, I have to go,” Johnny said and hung up.

“Huh,” Gary said and hung up the phone.

“We heard half the conversation partner,” Ron remarked, “Care to fill in the blanks?”

“There is not going to be anything official in the works at all,” Gary said, “And when I asked him that last question, he said it was an open line and hung up.”

“I knew it,” Ron said, “He’s been holding back on us the whole time.”

“I’m sure he has to some extent,” Gary agreed, “But he’s been awful good to us, too.”

“The man’s just been looking out for his family,” Clarence suggested. “If I were in his place, I do the same thing.”

“I just don’t know what to think anymore fellas,” Gary admitted. “Assume for a minute that what Johnny told us about Kerry issuing those Executive Orders is true. In that

case he has turned into a tyrant. But, he's accomplished that by using the laws and just pushing them to their limits. I've thought about this a little and have concluded that it won't be settled until it hits the Supreme Court. I could be wrong, but for the sake of argument, let's say I'm not. Back in the election of November 2000, they pushed those cases over the Florida election results to the Court in record time. But that was during peacetime and the country wasn't in the middle of trying to clean up from a terrorist attack and didn't have open gang warfare going on against the general populous."

"I don't know, but I think the court will give this its full attention, regardless of the circumstances," Gary continued. "But where is the Supreme Court? Are they in Mt. Weather with this psychopath? Did they get killed in Washington? I have the questions but with the limited amount of news Kerry is putting out, I don't have the answers."

"I remember you talking about some research you were doing for one of your stories," Ron said. "That was one of the stories where you were dealing with the 1st Amendment and prior restraint. I seem to recall that you said that the only time the 1st Amendment could be subject to control was a prior restraint permitted by a showing that there was a clear and present danger or something like that."

"Tom Clancy wrote that book and they made it into a movie," Gary said. "The clear and present danger test isn't even clear cut. The simplest definition I could find was Learned Hand's definition, "In each case courts must ask whether the gravity of the 'evil' discounted by its improbability, justifies such invasion of free speech as is necessary to avoid danger."

"Man, I hate to hear the complex definition," Clarence said.

"Actually it's easier to understand," Gary laughed. "However, remember 2 simple things guys. One, the danger must be immediate and harmful; and, two, the original decision of 200 years ago have been interpreted and reinterpreted to the point that you have to Shepardize the point before you can litigate it."

"You lost me on Dead Man's curve there," Ron said. "Shepardize?"

"It means to follow every citation of the original case and the subsequent cases on a point of law right up to the present," Gary said. "Let me give you an easy example. On Law and Order the lawyers are in the judge's chambers arguing a point of law. One attorney cites a case and the other attorney cites some other case that contradicts the first case cited. They found the cases to cite by Shepardizing the point of law and identifying every case where that point of law was brought into question and a judge made a ruling. Anyway, that's why it takes an attorney so much time to prepare for a case. And the more complicated the case, the more legal research. My point is that it will take a lot of lawyers a lot of hours to prepare to deal with the President's alleged basis for gagging the press under the clear and present danger test. And until the courts resolve the issue, USA Patriot Act I and II give the appearance of granting him those powers."

"It would be one hell of a lot easier to just shoot the SOB," Ron said.

"I'd have to agree with you partner, but this in a nation of laws, not men," Gary said.

"Huh?" Clarence responded.

"Clarence, no one is above the law, not even John Kerry," Gary explained.

"I seen that movie," Clarence smiled, "Steven Segal."

"Then you understand the principle, pal," Gary smiled. "A bunch of CIA types acted as if the law didn't apply to them and Segal took them out as usual."

"How did we get off on this discussion/lecture series?" Clarence asked.

"Someone is gagging the media big time and they can't do that," Gary said, "Even if it's nice not to hear Geraldo giving away our troops positions. Which, by the way, is an example where prior restraint of the media and freedom of speech might be appropriate."

"I thought Geraldo was dead," Clarence said.

"600 yards," Gary murmured. "No, the SOB is still alive and kicking. Gets his foot in his mouth every time he opens it, too. That man has 2 fan clubs, the people who like him and the people who want to kill him."

"Well we're so far off the original subject here I don't even know what the original subject was," Ron said.

"Whether or not to send David's boys to intercept those gang bangers," Gary reported. "And unless I get definite information from Johnny that the Army is going to intercept them I'm going to vote to send the boys."

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"We haven't heard a word from Johnny fellas, and the boys have burned through the match grade 7.62, so I'm going to contact Sandy and see about some more match ammo," Gary said.

"I'll ride along," Ron offered.

"Yeah, me too," Clarence said.

Gary had a 9am appointment with Sandy and he'd explained that he was primarily looking for some 7.62 match ammo, a good used M1911 and some .45ACP ammo. They

bought the flap holsters from White's surplus but had never picked up any pistols.

"500 rounds of match enough Gary?" Sandy asked.

"I'll take 1,000 if you have it," Gary said. "Did you find me a decent M1911 in your inventory?"

"It's got some miles on it but we worked it over, replaced the barrel and the barrel bushing and tightened up the slide," Sandy said. "I can let you have it for \$350."

"Magazines?" Gary asked.

"All you want of the 7 round GI surplus, but brand new, for \$8 a pop."

"I'll take 4 extra plus a case of the surplus ball ammo," Gary said.

"Pretty conservative today aren't we?" Sandy teased.

"Well, I'll take 100 each M14, M16 and M18 land mines if you've got them," Gary chuckled.

"They're not a stock item Gary, but if you're serious, I could look into it," Sandy said.

"Big bucks, right?" Gary suggested.

"For something like that, you bet," Sandy said.

"I figured as much," Gary said. "Some plain old dynamite would do the trick if I could get blasting caps, both fuse type and electrical plus some fuse and some wire."

"Know anything about dynamite?" Sandy asked.

"No, but I could learn if I had a good teacher," Gary said. "We all made it through the classes and got our guard cards and are Acting Deputy Sheriff's when we're on guard duty."

"Are you boys on duty now?" Sandy asked.

"No, but we make up the guard schedule and could be with a phone call if it was important," Gary said.

"Actually those guard cards and your badges are enough," Sandy said. "It just makes certain purchases legal under state law."

"For example?" Ron asked.

“LEO stuff like batons, high capacity magazines, etc.” Sandy explained.

“Like 8 round instead of 7 round mags for the M1911?” Gary asked.

“No, they’re both legal, but high capacity mags for Glock’s and stuff,” She said.

“Don’t have any of that stuff,” Gary said, “And our high capacity rifle mags are legal when we’re on guard duty.”

“What about the explosives?” Sandy said.

“What about the explosives?” Gary asked.

“How much do you want?” Sandy asked.

“I told you I don’t know anything about explosives Sandy,” Gary said.

“I’ll throw in an hour’s free instruction by my licensed husband,” she said.

“What can I get the best buy on?” Gary asked.

“Some stolen 1¼-pound blocks of military C-4,” she said.

“Expensive or inexpensive,” Gary asked.

“I gouged the soldier pretty good so inexpensive,” Sandy replied.

“How much will a grand get me?” Gary asked.

“I gave him a grand for everything he sold me including a large assortment of detonators,” Sandy said. “Buy some wire and some extra electrical caps and a couple other things and I’ll sell you everything for \$1,400. That will give me a \$250 profit on the stuff I got from him and my normal 20% markup on the legal stuff, plus full retail on the extra caps. It’s a good deal and I really want to get rid of it.”

“No more \$5 grenades for \$12.50 each?” Gary asked.

“I have more but they’ll cost you \$6.00 each,” She said.

“Any practice grenades?” Ron asked.

“Yes Ron, \$6 each.”

“Sandy I take my original order plus the explosives,” Gary said, “And I’ll pay any reasonable amount so we’re reasonable trained and won’t blow ourselves up.”

“Deal,” Sandy said.

“How many practice grenades, Ron,” she asked.

“3 dozen and a case of the 7.62 match,” Ron replied.

“1,000-round or 500-round case?”

“Make it 1,000 Sandy,” Ron said.

“Clarence?” Sandy asked.

“1,000 rounds of 7.62 match,” Clarence replied.

After they loaded everything into the car, Sandy made an appointment for instruction out in the desert northeast of Palmdale. One hour for free, \$50 per hour thereafter.

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They ended up owing Sandy’s husband an extra \$150 because they made him go through the training a couple of extra times and had quite a few questions. Gary had commented that The Three Amigos, and he especially, had a sweet spot for ANFO. Sandy’s husband told Gary that ANFO was the most commonly used explosive in the world, but that it was mostly used in mining operations. However, there was nothing wrong with ANFO. Then Gary remembered one of the other squirrel’s stories where he’d made some homemade Claymore like mines. Gary’s memory wasn’t the best and it seemed to him that he’d even used the things in one of his stories. ‘Barrel Claymores’ kept popping into his head for some reason. He decided that they should get some high nitrogen fertilizer and some diesel fuel. He could search the copies of his completed works, which he kept on the computer, and look for the reference to barrel claymores.

As Gary posted new chapters on the forum, he spent some time proofreading them a 3rd time. After they were proofread, he copied the corrected text from the little editing box into his clipboard and posted the chapter. Then he moved over to completed works and added the new chapter. Even doing it this way, he sometimes missed a glaring error in a story, but most of the time he caught 99% of the mistakes. In completed works, he pasted the new text, changed the final chapter number in the heading and clicked edit. Then the wait began because every time you clicked edit, the website software that Frugal used checked the entire document from start to finish for inappropriate language. When finally the updated work in progress posted, Gary went to the last chapter and copied it to his clipboard. That copy went into a second file on his computer labeled something like ‘The Three Amigos – Completed Work’.

Sometimes Gary caught a glaring error that he’d missed. If the error was of great significance, he went to Frugal’s and corrected the document in completed works right then and there. If it was a smaller error, he wrote it down and made the correction the next

time he added a chapter to the Completed Works section. He never bothered to correct his original document, but did make the changes in his copy of the Completed story file. Recently he had a problem where his spell checker shut down and refused to work. After considerable time working on Word, including running the repair function, he was no closer to a solution. In desperation he changed the name of the story by adding '1' to its name and opened the completed work file. He saved it as the original document without the '1' in the name and then used the clipboard to move the partially completed chapter to the new work file. Problem solved. Gary compared the files sizes of the new work file to the old work file. There was a tremendous difference in the file sizes. Apparently he had embedded something in the work file that screwed everything up. He had then deleted the original work file and resumed working on his story in the new, replacement work file.

Apparently Gary hadn't used the term 'barrel claymore' in any of his stories, because a search of the files that evening failed to get a single hit. But he sort of remembered that you put some ANFO in a container and added a detonator. Then, you filled the container with nuts and bolts and other small pieces of scrap metal. It was a bear to get old and lose your short-term memory. By the time he remembered the exact details, he'd probably be 70-years old. And, at the moment, he just wanted to get to age 64 in 2007.

The fertilizer and diesel fuel were easy to come by. They always saved their coffee cans and they had a lot of them. So the following day, they got the fertilizer and mixed it about 94% fertilizer and 6% fuel and dumped in nuts and bolts. Chris must have had half-dozen pails of bolts and nuts he was willing to contribute to the project and the junkyard sold them the remainder of what they needed. The improvised mines went on the east side, in the empty lot between the fortified wall and 47th street. They made up a control panel of sorts that let them individually detonate the mines or detonate them in sets. Gary was pretty handy at building control panels and Radio Shack had lots of switches. Chris even drilled holes in a large aluminum plate and mounted the switches for Gary. Gary remembered where this idea came from, his very first story titled 'The Ark'.

Meanwhile Johnny was busy organizing the citizens of Palmdale into a militia unit. There were plenty of people in the city who were well armed. There were cowboy action shooters, hunters with a range of high-powered rifles and all kinds of people with the same mindset as The Three Amigos. They had decided that they didn't want those gangsters to get anywhere near to Palmdale and had gone out to the four-corners and had started digging fighting holes and the like. Four-corners is the junction of Pearblossom Highway and 47th street about 4 miles down the road from the corner of Avenue S (1 mile south of R) and 47th Street. There's a Chevron station there and a large area used for a swap meet, called of all things, the Four-Corners Swap Meet. Gary didn't do swap meets all that often, but he knew about the place. Bimbo #1 used to keep their books at one time.

Having a firefight next to a gas station might not seem like a very good idea. However that Chevron station had run completely out of gas in early December 2005 so there

wasn't much danger of a fire. Besides they put fighting holes in on both sides of Avenue T-Pearblossom Highway. Hundreds of people had been organized and Johnny had been detached from his regular duties just to handle the new Palmdale Militia, as they called themselves. Hmm, there something mighty familiar about that name, I wonder why?

The Three Amigos – Chapter 13 – An Explosive Situation

“Well,” Gary said one night a few days later. “I finally got Frugal’s website up and went searching for barrel claymores. I checked all of Fleataxi’s stories and the only reference I found to anything like an improvised claymore was in *Bugged in Elko*. But the guy in that story used pipe, not coffee cans, to make his improvised claymores.”

“That makes sense,” Ron said, “A coffee can wouldn’t do much to contain the explosion.”

“You’re right Ron,” Gary agreed, “So this afternoon, I got Chris to help me find some 6” pipe and caps for the ends. Tomorrow we can rebuild all of those claymore mines.”

“I don’t know if I want to go near them,” Ron said. “They have those blasting caps and one of them could blow up in our face.”

“If one did, you’d never know what hit you,” Gary said. “But, I can unplug the panel and I put in a switch that shorts out every pair of wires. I also have a short wire with two alligator clips we can short across the cap leads where they connect to the wires. I think that we will be safe enough.”

“How are they coming with that big setup for the Palmdale Militia down at Four-Points?” Clarence asked.

“Haven’t been down there in a few days Clarence,” Gary explained, “But, the last time I was there, they looked to be ready.”

“Anymore word on the gangsters?” Ron asked.

“Not a word Ron,” Gary said, “It’s like we’re out of the information loop.”

“Johnny has been pretty busy now that the Sheriff put him in charge of the Palmdale Militia,” Clarence observed. “I hardly ever see him here visiting his kids.”

“Speaking of Johnny,” Gary said, “I sure wish we knew what he isn’t telling us about what is going on around the country.”

“I would have thought that the President would be on TV every day making announcements,” Clarence commented. “But he must be busy rescuing another guy from some river in Vietnam.”

“I doubt that very much Clarence,” Ron said, “But you do have a point. No doubt the country is busy cleaning up after the attacks. It didn’t take them all that long to clean up ground zero after the 9/11 attacks so I’d guess they’re doing pretty good cleaning up the country. You’d think that all of the rebuilding would be good for the economy, too. That’s a lot of money turning over a lot of times, if I remember my basics from Economics.”

“Say, not to change the subject,” Clarence lied, again, “But when do you think they will get mail service restored?”

“Expecting a big check in the mail, Clarence?” Ron chuckled.

“No, but I wouldn’t want them to cut the utilities to Lucy and my home,” Clarence explained.

“Clarence, it might be a long time,” Gary suggested, “But look on the bright side, we haven’t had any junk mail in months. And, until the utility company can deliver a bill to us they can’t cut our utilities.”

“Sez who?” Ron asked.

“Sez me,” Gary replied. “At least if anyone shows up here trying to turn off the utilities in this housing tract, it’s going to be a one-way trip for the guy.”

“Come to think of it, Gar-Bear, there haven’t been any people around reading the meters, have there?” Ron agreed.

“They could bill on average usage,” Gary opined, “But what’s the point with no mail service? That’s why I didn’t set up one of those automatic bill pay accounts. I always figured that they’d find a way to help themselves to my money if I used Wells Fargo to pay my bills directly.”

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Mt. Weather...

“What’s the status on the cleanup?” Kerry asked.

“All of the bodies have been buried and about 75% of the damaged buildings have been knocked down and the debris hauled away,” the Secretary DHS reported.

“And we’ve managed to accomplish this all with impressed labor, right?” Kerry continued.

“We have, yes sir,” the Secretary replied. “But once we get to the reconstruction phase, we’re going to have to hire contractors to rebuild the buildings.”

“But only the governmental buildings,” Kerry said, “The population is going to have to pay for their own rebuilding, right?”

“Right, Mr. President,” the Secretary agreed.

“How is the food distribution going?” Kerry asked.

“Well, we’ve had a little problem there, so we cut them from 1,800 calories to 1,500 calories and told them they were getting higher calorie food to explain the reduction in volume,” the Secretary outlined.

“How’s that court case going challenging my Executive Orders?” Kerry asked.

“Well, we got Kennedy, Clinton and Schumer to call for a Congressional investigation of the opponents to the Orders,” the Secretary explained. “Plus the Solicitor General has filed enough motions to keep the case tied up in the lower court for at least a year.”

“What’s the status on the gangs,” Kerry asked.

“We have the gang problem handled in New York and the other big cities, Mr. President,” the Secretary replied. “California is an entirely different story. The gangs broke out of LA after a couple of months and moved toward the San Bernardino area, looting along the way. They cleaned out several armories and are extremely well equipped. We tried to move in on them in San Bernardino, but it was almost impossible for the attack helicopters to fire in the city area. And, of course, they joined up with the gangs in San Bernardino, increasing their number.”

“Is that where they are now, San Bernardino?” Kerry asked.

“Actually no, Mr. President,” the Secretary explained, “They couldn’t go east because of the armor we set up and there wasn’t any reason for them to return to LA. They could have gone north or south from there and we guessed wrong and put most of our forces to the south. They went north and broke through our lines before we could reinforce them. We sent in the Apaches, but they must be only traveling 2 to a car, thousands of cars headed north out of San Bernardino and there were more targets than the Apaches could handle.”

“So they’re northbound on I-15?” Kerry asked.

“Most of them yes, Mr. President, but a small contingent split off on California route 138 and headed in the general direction of Palmdale,” the Secretary commented.

“Palmdale? Isn’t that where Plant 42 is located?” Kerry inquired.

“It is, yes,” the Secretary continued. “We wouldn’t want anyone seeing some of the stuff we have there. Lockheed moved the Skunk Works to Plant 42 a number of years ago. And, that’s where they’re building the Aurora. Anyway, we did some recon flights and the citizens of Palmdale have built up quite a fighting position about 4 miles southeast of the city. I should also mention that one of the Generals forwarded an unofficial request up the line. A Sergeant with the LA County Sheriff’s department made a backdoor request through an Army Master Sergeant. It seems that some guy or bunch of guys

came up with the idea of ambushing those gangsters if they turned onto that 138 highway. They had the idea of blocking the road by blowing up a couple gangster cars with LAW's Rocket's and then the Army could send in the Apaches and blow up the gangsters cars."

"Now that's what I mean," Kerry said, completely changing the subject, "We have civilians out there armed with LAW's rockets. They probably have automatic weapons, too. We need to send the ATF boys in there to arrest the whole lot of them. The public has no business owning firearms. But no, that danged Congress wouldn't pass the Assault Weapons Ban."

"Well, the way you had the ban rewritten, it would have outlawed most hunting firearms," the Secretary said. "Of course Congress was wrong, but those Executive Orders of your neatly circumvented that. What do you want to do about those gangs, Mr. President?"

"Send some troops to Plant 42 in case those gangsters get past that area southeast of Palmdale," Kerry said, "But put all of the attack helicopters on I-15 northbound. We can't have them getting to Vegas, now can we?"

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"You don't look any older Gar-Bear," Ron said commenting on the fact that it was Gary's 63rd birthday.

"I don't feel any older either partner," Gary admitted. "But then, I've felt like I was 70 for the past 5 or 6 years, so I guess it will be a while before I feel any older. What's in the box?"

"Clarence and I went in together and got you a very nice birthday present from Sandy," Ron explained.

Gary opened the box. "Wow," he said, "This is nice Ron, but what exactly is it?"

"I thought you'd recognize it right away, Gar-Bear," Clarence said, "That there is a genuine Kimber, Custom TLE/RL with the nightlight and everything. It is identical to the one shown on the back cover of the August 2004 issue of American Rifleman. We even got you the .22LR Conversion Kit so's you can practice with cheap ammo."

"But that won't fit in my flap holster with the light mounted," Gary said. "Don't get me wrong, fellas, I absolutely love the gun and the thoughtfulness that went into you picking it for me. I'll get out on the net and find a new holster, no problem."

"That won't be necessary Gary," Chris said handing Gary a second box.

“Thanks Chris,” Gary said. “Say this is an odd looking holster, what brand is it?”

“It’s a handmade copy of the US Cavalry swivel holster, the ‘Pershing model’,” Chris explained. “I have a friend who is into leatherwork and he took the original swivel holster and dismantled it. Then, he put together a new holster part big enough to hold that Kimber with the light mounted.”

“Guys, I don’t know what to say,” Gary beamed. “An LA SWAT pistol and a custom holster to hold it. Thanks a million.”

Bianchi makes the T6500 Tac Holster LT which offers security, comfort and ease of draw. Adjustable to fit most pistol mounted tactical lights, it also features a hold down strap to prevent movement when attached to the Modular Accessory Panel. The thumb break includes a secondary security strap for double retention. Right and left hand to fit most large frame semi autos. If you happen to be into nylon holsters, and aren’t interested in looking like George S. Patton.

Now Gary had a holster to wear on his ALICE gear setup for the M1A (the Kimber) and on his ALICE gear set up for his M16A3 (the 1911 he bought from Sandy). The boy was moving in tall cotton after his birthday party. Ron and he had retrieved their M1A’s and M16A3’s from David’s boys when they had decided that the Army could guard Hwy 138. And, if the Army didn’t, there was always the Palmdale Militia down at the Chevron Station at Four-Points. The militia group had steadily grown and they had just kept putting in more fighting positions (\$9 name for foxhole) to accommodate the new members. They added more fighting positions on the Littlerock side of the intersection too, so that they could hit the bangers before they even got to the intersection. Of course no one in Palmdale knew that Kerry had abandoned them in favor of protecting Las Vegas. Kerry didn’t know it, but he was going to be a one-term President, one way or another.

With the modification of the improvised claymores into something hopefully resembling what Fleataxi had described in his story, The Three Amigos were about as ready as they could get. With the free time on their hands, they began to discuss a variety of matters.

“It’s funny about that redhead,” Ron said, “What was her name?”

“Janice Worth,” Clarence said.

“That’s right, Janice Worth with the worthwhile front end,” Ron laughed. “She was out of here the next day. And that sister of hers was on ‘the other side’.”

“Well Ron,” Clarence suggested, “Once that husband of hers was in jail, there was no more reason for her to stay here, was there?”

“I guess not, Clarence,” Ron agreed. “And can someone explain to me why Randy built

a huge shelter double the size of the one that Gary built? Seems like closing the barn door after the horses have run away.”

“Which horse?” Clarence asked, “Salina?”

“Would you get off Salina Clarence?” Gary snapped. “I let you name my golf cart Salina.”

“Oh all right, if you’re going to be sensitive,” Clarence said. “Ron, maybe Randy figured that a shelter might come in handy if we couldn’t stop those gang bangers. His shelter is big enough to provide a place for all of the other families that are on the A list.”

“Did someone remember to turn off those dehumidifiers?” Gary asked. “Those little pails would be pretty full by now.”

“You did it yourself, Gar-Bear,” Ron replied, “Man, your memory must really getting bad. It’s a shame we couldn’t get in touch with that friend of yours up in San Francisco. We have enough shotgun ammo that Thumper would really add to our firepower.”

“What does Bambi have to do with Moon Shadows?” Gary asked.

Different Thumper, Gary. Ron was talking about the 12-gauge Gatling gun from *The Ark*. But, if those gang bangers had raided some armories, they were probably armed with M60’s, Ma Deuces, and who knew what else? Ronald might have a point about that Gatling gun. It was a real shame that the only *machine guns* they had were a few M16A2s. Did Sandy deal in heavy-weapons? Well, Sandy said she could get them M14s, M16s and M18s but at a price they couldn’t afford. So, the answer was probably yes, but they probably couldn’t afford them either. On the other hand, there was that armory on 30th Street East. No one had thought to check it out. Maybe a little late night recon mission was in order. To the best of their knowledge, no one had hit the armory yet and it had been over 4 months since TSHTF.

The California National Guard Armory on 30th Street East in Palmdale was home to Company B, 1st Battalion, 185th Armor Division of the Army National Guard. California Senator George Runner had also secured funding in the State Budget for the acquisition and construction of a National Guard Armory in the City of Lancaster, so it appeared that they had more than one place to check out on their night mission. Night mission meant night vision and they had never gotten around to getting any night vision equipment. They borrowed a pair from Johnny on the pretense that they wanted to check them out and see if they were worth the investment.

Now, it seemed that those Abrams tanks had 4 guns, the 120mm smoothbore cannon, a M240 coaxial 7.62mm machine gun, a M240 for the loader and an M2HB .50 caliber machine gun, both removed and stored because you couldn’t leave the detachable machine gunsmounted, now could you? There were the Ma Deuces and a pretty fair supply of ammo, but no tripods. But, there was a fella named Chris who could weld anything

and with lots of pictures of M2 tripods. The military would just have to replace the M2's and they were going to be busy welding for a few days.

Gary returned the night vision goggles to Johnny and told them that they were nice, but he wasn't sure he could afford a pair. Gary must have caught Johnny either in a good mood or busy as hell, there had been a break-in at the armory on 30th Street East the prior night and Johnny had been pulled off duty with the militia to run the investigation for now. Johnny told Gary to keep the binoculars.

"Well that beats a sharp stick in the eye," Gary said, "Johnny said I could keep the binoculars."

"Strange," Ron replied.

"He was busy trying to find out who did the burglary at the National Guard Armory last night," Gary explained.

"We'll be ok as long as he doesn't look in that shelter of yours," Ron said.

"Thing is Ron, once we have to use the machine guns, there won't be any denying where we got them," Gary observed.

"Then, I suppose we'll just have to give them back, assuming we're alive to do it," Ron responded.

"Why do you always assume that we're going to get killed Ron?" Clarence asked.

"Clarence there are only about 60 of us on the A list and if this housing tract takes a major hit, we'll be lucky if any of us survives," Ron answered.

"Ron any gang bangers who get by that trap the militia have set up at Four-Points shouldn't be much of a problem," Clarence insisted.

"Clarence it all depends," Gary tossed in his two cents. "If it is a big enough group, they can go north out of Littlerock and end up right up there at the curve where the road comes from north of Littlerock. If they go west or north from there, we'll be ok. But if they turn south, they'll be all over us."

"Why would they be all over us?" Clarence demanded, "We could just let them go on south."

"Clarence if they go on south, they'll probably be trying to flank the militia and attack from the rear," Ron said, "If I know my Gar-Bear, he's suggesting that we engage those gangsters to keep them from attacking the militia."

"Couldn't have put it better myself, Ronald McDonald," Gary grinned. "We won't have a

choice, Clarence, we'll have to attack them.”

“Well, all right,” Clarence said, “But I think you’re just looking for an excuse to shoot those machine guns we don’t have in Gary’s shelter.”

And, be careful what you wish for, Gary, God has a sense of humor and...

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The gangsters split-up up when they got to the 138 junction with I-15. The majority, about 80%, continued north on I-15, headed for Las Vegas and points in between like Victorville and Barstow. Maybe Kerry had made a wise decision and no one realized it. North of Barstow, in the vicinity of Fort Irwin, I-15 was blocked with armor, just like I-10 had been blocked with armor. That would be the end of that group of gangsters’ journey. Blockades were also set up on I-40 eastbound and on state route 58 west bound. Those 8,000 or so people weren’t going to get much out of Victorville and the Apple Valley, because they had been evacuated. The folks in Barstow were also moved out to the west, and tanks sat on every off ramp for Barstow. Anyone who ventured off the freeway would get their butts shot off with the 120mm cannons. Even John Kerry got some things right and he did have military advisors. He didn’t listen to them very often, but he had this time, at least with respect to the Fort Irwin trap.

No one was watching 138 and the gangsters just tooled along headed for the high desert. A few of them swung over to Phelan but that didn’t take long. Neither did Piñon Hills, further up 138. They could have taken Highway 2 into Wrightwood and then the road down to Valyermo and on into Pearblossom. But, the signs said Palmdale and they just followed the signs. Thus, it wasn’t until they hit the LA county line just past Piñon Hills that the Sheriff’s helicopter picked them up. The Deputies couldn’t really see in the back because of the heavily tinted windows but they certainly could see the two people sitting in the front seat.

Patrol cars started announcing over their loudspeakers that the Palmdale Militia should get to their posts. The word spread quickly and almost all of the militia was in place before the first cars hit Pearblossom. Now Pearblossom barely slowed the gangsters down, there are only a few businesses in the small town and those gangsters soon learned that the stores had been stripped. There weren’t any people in Pearblossom or in Littlerock for that matter; Johnny had moved them into Palmdale for their own protection several days earlier, per instructions.

By now, you should realize that there were nearly 1,000 cars, give or take, headed towards Palmdale. If 80% of the total gangsters were about 8,000 people, then there must have been a total of 10,000 of them and I did mention that they were traveling 2 per car, remember? The only reason that is significant is that a string of cars, nearly 1,000 vehicles long really strings out at highway speeds. Pearblossom had caused them to bunch up some and Littlerock a little more. It’s about 4 miles from Littlerock to Four-Points. Therefore, when the bad guys arrived at Four-Points and came under fire from the

Palmdale Militia and the Sheriff's Department, two things happened. For one, the vehicles began to bunch up again. And with the bunching and the sound of gunfire, the gangsters started to look for ways out of the trap. Some took Avenue T-8 only to run into a semi-trailer across the road protected by some of the militiamen. In fact, all of the off roads between Littlerock were blocked and manned by militiamen.

Those people who took 87th street East northbound, got lucky, or so it appeared. North of Avenue T, they didn't go that way because they could hear the gunfire, 87th curved into 90th East and continued north to East Palmdale Boulevard. The gangsters would have been smart to just keep going north on 90th East to Avenue K and turned west, taking them into the heart of Lancaster. Well maybe not so smart, the guys in Lancaster had East Avenue K pretty well covered too. But, they were going to Palmdale and this was Palmdale Boulevard, so the 150-200 remaining cars turned to the west.

Johnny wasn't anybody's fool, he'd had the city pull several dump trucks just past where 47th St. splintered off from the road to Four-Points and the road was blocked protecting their backs. He had figured that some of the gangsters might go north on 87th Street East and a Deputy was dispatched to Plant 42 to get the Army to move some troops to block East Palmdale Boulevard. Johnny had it all worked out with some Captain, but on that very day, the Captain's superior had flown into the airport at Plant 42. When the Deputy arrived and tried to get the Captain to move his troops to cover the Boulevard, as agreed, the Captain's commander, Murphy wasn't it, vetoed the plan and ordered the Captain to remain in place and protect Plant 42. Captains are allowed to disagree with their 'superior' officers, but that only goes so far. There comes that point in every young Captain's career when he must decide to follow orders or mutiny and do what he thinks is right. This particular officer hadn't been a Captain very long and decided that the Major knew best.

What difference did it make if a few gang bangers got into the Skunk Works and got a peek at the secret aircraft? And I'll personally vouch for the assertion that it is secret aircraft. Those reports from Cal Tech about the Aurora sightings on their seismographs came as no surprise. Anyway, those cars were on Palmdale Boulevard East headed for the intersection of 47th Street East and Palmdale Boulevard and the intersection was unguarded. The Deputy, frustrated at the lack of response from the Army, got all available patrol cars, it wasn't many, and they threw a quick cordon across Palmdale Boulevard east of 40th Street using a semi-trailer. The Deputy radioed Johnny, but got no response.

When the alarm had gone out, The Three Amigos got into Gary's shelter and with some help, got the Ma Deuces and ammo out of the ground. Chris had made some tripods, and he'd also made some mounts that slipped over the fence at the end of Moonraker Road. The guys loaded the machine guns onboard the golf carts and ferried them to the east fence. Three of the weapons went into the mounts Chris had fashioned and several others were set on their tripods on top of the earth filled place between the two fences. Ron and Gary got boxes to stand on and manned a Ma-Deuce. Clarence also manned one of the .50 caliber weapons, but he didn't need a box to stand on. They only worked

with the machine guns long enough that they knew how to load them and how to clear a jam. Because of the sensitive nature pertaining to how they acquired the heavy machine guns, they hadn't thought it prudent to test fire the weapons. Johnny was still looking for the perpetrators of the burglary.

When the gangsters arrived at 47th Street East and Palmdale Boulevard, they could clearly see the roadblock the Deputy had thrown up. They had a choice, turn right and go north or help out their buddies by turning south towards the sounds of the gunfire. The man in the lead car was torn between his desire to escape and the thin loyalty he felt for his gangster friends. He hesitated and then turned left, to help out his friends. In the words of the Knight guarding the Grail in 'Indiana Jones and the last Crusade', "He chose poorly."

"Here they come," Ron said.

"Let them get a little past and take out that lead vehicle with a LAW Rocket," Gary suggested.

"I'll do it," Justin said.

"I'll get the vehicle in back," Jason offered.

When the Deputies saw the cars turn left off Palmdale Boulevard, they called the Sheriff's Station and told them to warn Johnny. They had been unable to raise him on their radios, they said. The station advised them that a few stragglers from the militia had shown up at the station and were looking for guidance. The Deputy told the station to send them east on Palmdale Boulevard, their assistance was badly needed. Well, those weren't his exact words, but you get the idea. It is against the law to swear on a radio isn't it? Or, are Deputy Sheriff's exempt from that?

Cliffhanger (1993), starring Sylvester Stallone in the role of Gabe Walker and John Lithgow as the bad guy. Lithgow didn't make a very good bad guy in Gary's opinion. Janine Turner, 35C-23-36, didn't make the movie hard on the eyes, though.

The Three Amigos – Chapter 14 – How Time Slips Away

*Well hello there,
my it's been a long long time
How am I doin',
oh well I guess I'm doin' fine
It's been so long now and it seems that
It was only yesterday
Mmm, ain't it funny how time slips away*

It seemed as if only 8 days or so had passed since Ron and Gary had had the conversation that began this series of events. But, like old Willy said, *Ain't it funny how times slips away?* And here The Three Amigos were facing a firefight. They couldn't see all of the cars; they stretched back to Palmdale Boulevard and to the east. When the lead car was about even with the end of the commercial zone. Gary nodded and Justin fired the LAW's Rocket. Justin quickly grabbed a second rocket and took out the second car that was trying to go around the burning first car. When Justin reached for a third rocket, Jason hit the third car, also trying to bypass the pile of burning wreckage. Jason was right on the money and southbound 47th Street East was effectively blocked. Justin then turned to the north and let his third LAW Rocket fly at the car stuck in the turn onto 47th street East. A short street extended south from the intersection of Palmdale Boulevard and from that street, one made a left turn onto the southbound street. By hitting the car where he did, Justin almost had the other end of the line of cars stopped up. Jason let loose with his second rocket and about 100 of the 150 + cars were stuck between the two piles of wreckage. The remainder of the gangsters headed north on 50th Street East.

47th Street East curved to the right just north of the intersection and became 50th Street East. On the east side of Palmdale, that was the favored way to get to Lancaster. The Deputies on the roadblock were on the radio to the Lancaster Sheriff's station at Lancaster Boulevard and Sierra Highway and they were sending all units Code 3 to assist the Palmdale Deputies. In fact, most of the Deputies were almost to Palmdale because they'd been following the action on the radio and hadn't waited to be asked.

Meanwhile, as soon as the Rockets began to stop the gangsters' cars, The Three Amigos and the others with the Ma Deuces opened up. At the range we're talking here, you didn't need to be any rocket scientist to handle the Ma Deuce. It was at most 40 yards to the nearest cars and fewer than 300 to the cars furthest away. And with 8 Ma Deuces capable of pouring out 550 rounds-per-minute, the cars and gangsters were going down fast. The old boys knew better than to just send off a steady stream of fire, Gary had a lot of field manuals on his computer, and they put 2 or 3 bursts into a vehicle before moving to the next. The other members on the A list who were manning the wall that day had the M16A2's and the boys' M16A4's and they poured fire into anyone who managed to get out of the vehicles alive. There had been something happen like this back in the big one, WW II, only it involved airplanes. I seem to recall it being called the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot. It had been on Monday, June 19, 1944.

In the early morning hours Japanese reconnaissance finds US Task Force 58 while remaining undetected. The Japanese immediately launched 372 aircraft, in four waves, to strike the American fleet. Overall, the Japanese have about 550 planes (including those on Guam) while the Americans have roughly 950. Furthermore, US radar provides significant advance warning of the attack. There is enough time to launch an air raid on Guam before the Japanese can arrive over their target. American fighters begin intercepting the incoming Japanese planes while 50 miles away.

Many of the attackers are shot down before reaching the American fleet; US anti-aircraft defenses account for many more. The only hit achieved by the Japanese is on the USS South Dakota which is damaged by one bomb. The Japanese lose 240 aircraft and the Americans lose 29. The attackers fly on to Guam where American aircraft strike and destroy another 50 Japanese planes. Meanwhile, the Japanese aircraft carriers Taiho and Shokaku are sunk by the US submarines Cavalla and Albacore. American participants refer to the day as "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot" because of the ease with which the Japanese forces have been suppressed. You folks need to watch the History Channel more.

I'm not sure that this particular day would go down in history as the Great Palmdale Turkey Shoot. But a couple of the gangsters did rush the tract and Josh, who was in charge of the improvised claymore mines that day, got to flip one switch and they now knew that the improvised claymore mines were bloody well effective, almost. And fortune smiled on The Three Amigos. The moment the firing stopped the M-2's went back on the golf carts and were rushed back to Gary's shelter. Several people kept watch while others quickly policed the brass and threw it into trashcans. They checked twice, just to make certain that hadn't missed a single piece of brass. The power was also disconnected from the mine control panel and it was returned to the locked steamer truck they kept it in for safety's sake.

The Three Amigos knew full well that once the bodies and vehicles had been examined their secret would be out. Regardless, they weren't going to advertise what they had in their possession. The Sheriff's Department was going to have to ask before they willingly gave up the 8 Ma Deuces. They'd give them up only when it became apparent that they didn't have much other choice. And say, maybe I forgot to mention how many of those M16 rifles they picked up on that little midnight requisition. You can get a pretty good idea from the story. It was a Company sized unit assigned to the Armory.

Tank units have 2 M4s in each tank and some M16A2s for the support people. The tankers' all carry an M9 as their standard firearm. They took the M9s too, but only for the women and to use as trading goods with Sandy. One thing you could count on, the ATF would have a whole contingent of people in Palmdale trying to track down that armory theft. But if push came to shove, they'd just return the weapons to the Armory. They usually wore those latex exam gloves when they cleaned weapons anyway. They didn't like getting the Hoppe's and break free CLP on their skin.

What, you wanted more action? Those gangsters never had a chance. Hell they barely got off a shot. *A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week. A good solution applied with vigor now is better than a perfect solution applied ten minutes later. America loves a winner, and will not tolerate a loser, this is why America has never, and will never, lose a war. A pint of sweat will save a gallon of blood.*

Needless to say, The Three Amigos were jubilant. They had caught the gangsters completely off guard, and had mowed them down before most of them had even been able to get out of their mostly stolen cars. The gangsters who had made a quick decision to turn north on 50th Street were intercepted by the Deputies from Lancaster and between the Deputies and a bunch of those militiamen from Lancaster, the gangsters all died. Down the road, the Palmdale Militia hadn't had it so easy. They'd managed to stop the gang bangers, eventually, but had paid a stiff price. Armed as they were with a combination of hunting rifles, some Mini-14s and a few of those illegal AR-15 Hbars, they were out gunned by the bad guys. However, their superior numbers had prevailed in the end. About 30 Palmdale residents were dead and between 200 and 300 of them were wounded. Johnny and the other Deputies on the scene hadn't interfered when the citizens helped themselves to the stolen M16s and the AKs carried by the gangsters.

However, when the Palmdale Militia people began to pick up things like M60s and AT-4s the Deputies did step forward. A compromise of sorts was reached. The *machine guns*, e.g., the full auto, belt-fed weapons would be maintained at the Sheriff's Department along with the Rockets. The people who had participated in protecting the community would be allowed to keep the shoulder arms and handguns. Ambulances were called and some quick stopgap first aid applied to the wounded before they were hauled to the only hospitals in the area in Lancaster. The Palmdale Hospital had been closed years before. It sat almost on top of the San Andreas Fault and was a financial disaster anyway. I'm sorry to report that not everyone transported to Lancaster survived the trip. And, with so many wounded to treat, the Lancaster hospitals were overwhelmed and some folks died awaiting treatment. The hospitals triaged the wounded, but there were more seriously wounded people needing surgery than they could handle at one time. In the end, 56 members of the Palmdale Militia were dead.

[Palmdale finally opened a new hospital in 2010.]

The Three Amigos soon lost their jubilancy, too. A fella named Trevor with the Lancaster Militia had come on into Palmdale to see the boys' handy work. He was mighty impressed, right up until he got to the improvised pipe claymores.

"You boys are plenty dang lucky that bomb went off," Trevor said.

"What do you mean?" Gary replied, "We used ANFO, the most popular explosive in the world."

"I can see that fellas," Trevor said. "Let me tell you a few things about ANFO. I'm not sure what research you did or your sources on ANFO but, Ammonium Nitrate is very

Hydroscopic so fertilizer grade AN is coated to keep it from absorbing moisture. This also degrades the absorption of Fuel Oil/Diesel Fuel.”

“Fertilizer AN needs to be water *Washed* first, then dried at 100-110 degrees in an oven for an hour or so to remove the coating which will increase the absorption rate of the Fuel Oil/Diesel Fuel by 20%-30%,” he continued. “This also *sensitizes* the AN for easier detonation by reducing its density to around 0.6 g/ccm to 0.8 g/ccm. Standard ANFO without *sensitizing* will NOT detonate with the standard commercial #8 or Military blasting cap 99% of the time. ANFO that is allowed to *settle* for a period (hours to days) of time will become dense enough that it will NOT detonate and it’s a good practice to add Micro-Balloons as used in Fiberglass to keep the ANFO from becoming too dense to detonate if it is to be allowed to set for any length of time.”

“Now,” Trevor went on, “For added *kick* change out the Fuel Oil/Diesel Fuel to 95% Nitromethane (model airplane/drag racing fuel) and you can increase the explosive power by 30% by making ANNM. You can also add 4%-6% Aluminum Powder #300-#600 Mesh for even a little more kick. One source of 100% *Pure AN* is *Instant Cold/Ice Packs*, just open them up and dump out the AN pills and toss the (sodium chloride/water) pop bag away.”

“Frankly,” Trevor said shaking his head, “I’m downright surprised that even one improvised Claymore went off. Ever since Timothy McVey blew up that federal building in Oklahoma City, the public has had this big attraction to ANFO. It is the most commonly used explosive in the world, but we’re not talking homemade ANFO. It is commercially prepared stuff, usually in the form of a slurry.”

“Well, that explains that,” Gary said.

“What do you mean?” Trevor asked.

“That control panel is set up to allow us to detonate the claymores individually or in groups,” Gary said, “Josh threw a group switch, but only one mine went off.”

“Was there anything special about the mine that did go off?” Trevor asked.

“We ran out of ANFO and that one had a charge of C-4,” Gary explained.

“Boys, I’ll stick around for a few hours and help you redo those improvised Claymores,” Trevor offered. “It sounds to me like you’re a mite shy on knowledge when it comes to improvised explosives. If you have enough of that C-4, we can put together something a whole lot more reliable.”

Help comes from the strangest places. But, The Three Amigos weren’t ones to turn down advice, especially from someone who seemed to know what he was talking about when it came to ANFO. Exercising a great deal of care, Trevor dismantled the improvised Claymores and replaced the homemade ANFO with an appropriate amount of C-

4.

“Well, you boys are set, but I’d like to have a look at that control panel you use to detonate those mines,” Trevor said, “If you don’t object.”

“It’s right over here in the steamer trunk,” Gary said. Trevor looked at Gary’s setup.

“You would be a whole lot better off if you used DPST switches,” Trevor advised. “That way in the off position the leads to the explosives could be wired to short out.”

“We cleaned out Radio Shack, so we have the switches,” Gary said, “I’ll rewire the panel.”

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Rather than dismantle the existing panel Gary asked Chris to make him up a new one. The existing panel might have its problems, but it would work until Gary could assemble the new improved model. Gary worked late into the night, making the connections and carefully soldering each wire into the huge Cannon plug. It was almost morning by the time he finished, but now everything was properly shorted in the off position and got the jolt of electricity in the on position. Gary figured that the odds favored them never needing to use the panel again, because the gangsters were all dead. But Gary hadn’t been thinking about the national political scene that night, and so the thought of needing to deal with a President who was running amok never crossed his mind.

Johnny had come by later and supervised the cleanup of the gangsters’ bodies. You didn’t have to be Albert Einstein to realize that someone had used .50 caliber machine guns on those gangsters. That solved the mystery of the missing Ma-Deuces as far as he was concerned. The next morning Johnny ‘closed’ the investigation, noting that person or persons unknown took the weapons from the armory. The case wasn’t officially closed, but it became a “dead file”. Johnny also surveyed the machine guns collected from the now dead gangsters. There was a disproportionately large amount of .50BMG ammunition. Well, he had an idea where some of that ammo belonged and he loaded up the back of the Department’s pickup and dropped it off when he went to visit his kids.

“What’s with all the .50 cal ammo, Johnny?” Gary asked.

“You could probably use some extra ammo for the machine guns you don’t have,” Johnny replied.

“Are you implying that we’re the guys behind the burglary at the armory,” Gary asked.

“I’m implying nothing, Gary,” Johnny said, “Besides, I gave up on that investigation and moved the file to the dead files. Are you folks sufficiently equipped with mags and ammo for the M16s you have on hand?”

"I guess," Ron said, "But you can never have too many magazines and ammo. I figured that with the gangs out of the picture, we'd be ok."

"Gentlemen," Johnny responded, "The gang problem is solved, but this country has bigger problems than those gangs. I can't really get into it because of confidentiality, but let me tell you one thing. Those Ma Deuces and M16s that you stole from the armory are the least of your worries. Every semiautomatic weapon you have is illegal except when you're on guard duty and acting in the capacity of Deputy Sheriff's."

"Dang," Clarence uttered, "So it's come to that, huh?"

"I talked to the Sheriff in person to see about making you folk's fulltime Deputies," Johnny said, "But since you don't have the formal training, he denied my request. The only alternatives that I can think of is to schedule everyone on the A list to be on guard duty 24/7. I'd be the first one to admit that it is pretty weak, but unless I can convince him otherwise, it's all you have going for you. I'm going to try the Reserve Deputy bit the next time I see the Sheriff. After what you folks accomplished with those gang bangers, I think maybe I can make that fly. Everyone has an armed guard card, so it isn't like you don't have any training."

"We helped ourselves to some of the stuff those gang bangers had, Johnny," Ron remarked. "So, we're a lot better off than we were on weaponry. We have enough M16s for everyone and then some. On the other hand, we're not long on ammo for those Romanian AK's we have. We could let the Palmdale Militia have the AKs."

"Collect them while I visit with my kids and I'll see that they find a good home," Johnny offered.

When Johnny came back, all of the AK's, magazines and ammo were in the back of his truck. There were several of the M16's, too, all absent magazines. The M16's were in pretty tough shape from the looks of them. The Department was going to need to give them the once over and make repairs before they could be issued to the members of the Palmdale Militia. There was an assortment of other weapons in the truck, too. M1 Carbines with magazines and ammo, for example. The M40 and M25 rifles however didn't make it to the pickup.

The Three Amigos and the others had been busy checking out the rifles and when they couldn't get one to function properly, they had put it a pile of discards. As it was, they were armed to the teeth with more than one M16 in good working order for every man, woman and child in the families who were on the A list. They also had added a lot of hand grenades to their inventory and some of the M136 AT-4 Rockets. It was a good thing that Sharon had plenty of tape for her labeling machine. Those 20 golf carts now sported a box on top containing a good assortment of carefully label hand munitions, ranging from flares to M67 grenades. None of the M16s turned over to the Sheriff's department had a M203 attached, either.

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Some of the gang bangers had the Interceptor vests in the back seats of their cars. All of the vests had been collected and passed out among the A list people. Apparently the bad guys had thought they were bulletproof, only a few of them had been wearing the vests. The vests, as good as they were, hadn't stopped the armor piercing ammo in the belts feeding the Ma Deuces. Everything, it was obvious, had its limitations. And those Kraut helmets the US had gone to? In the back seats, too, for whatever reason.

15Apr06...

"I guess I won't worry about filing any tax return," Ron announced. "There ain't no mail service so it seems pointless."

"The IRS be looking for you Ron," Clarence suggested.

"Yeah, along with the FBI, the ATF and FEMA," Ron chuckled. "Instead of sitting around here visiting about the alphabet soup of feds looking for us, we ought to be planting the mines we took off that bunch of gangsters. Those boys had a fair assortment of mines in the trunks of their cars. And, we haven't done anything to protect our western flank between us and Grecian isles."

"Now I realize why the name Palmdale Militia means something to me," Gary said. "In one of my stories I dreamed up a Palmdale Militia and housed them all at Grecian Isles Trailer Park."

"Big outfit like what we have here in town?" Ron asked.

"Don't exactly remember, you know, but I think it was a small outfit with about 50 members more or less," Gary said. "But you're right about those mines partner, I'm going to call that Trevor fella and see if he has time to help us with them. He sure knows a lot more about explosives than we do."

Trevor was a good-natured fella and he'd be glad to help them to the extent he could. They also put in a call to Sandy and she sent her husband around. Trevor and the husband got to visiting and ending up laughing their heads off at the attempt The Three Amigos had made at producing homemade ANFO. The guys had the right idea, they agreed, but they were just a little short on knowing how to do it. Can't really say who ended up putting in the M14s, M16s and M18s, but they were put in. Trevor told Gary that he needed to build another smaller panel to fire off the genuine Claymores. Gary already had Chris drilling out another aluminum plate. Trevor showed Gary the wires from the M18's and they worked together, shorting them out and soldering them into the female Cannon plug. They wrote down which connector went to which mine so Gary could properly wire the new panel. Moon Shadows was one step closer to excellent security but security from what enemy?

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Mt. Weather...

"Putting the Army on I-15 worked out pretty well," Kerry said.

"The bunch in Palmdale accounted for the remainder of the gangsters, Mr. President," the Secretary DHS remarked, "They tried to get the Army involved but by good luck, Major Murphy was at the Plant and he stopped that Captain from sending out troops to help."

"Give Murphy a promotion to Lt. Colonel and bust that Captain back to 1st Lieutenant," Kerry ordered. "We can't have the Army getting involved in what is obviously strictly a civilian problem. Terry and I are going to take a couple of days off any go to Vegas," Kerry announced. "You see to it that there are plenty of Army troops guarding the town, will you?"

"I'll take care of it Mr. President," the Secretary said, "But shouldn't you be making that request through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?"

"That SOB seems to object to some of my Executive Orders," Kerry noted. "No, I can't trust him to cover my back. You'd better handle it yourself."

"I'll do that," the Secretary replied, "But you'd better do some fence mending with the military Mr. President. They are all that's standing between you and the public booting you out of office."

"What's bugging the public now?" Kerry asked.

"We had to cut the rations from 1,500 calories to 1,200 calories, for one thing," the Secretary explained. "They aren't buying the line about higher calorie food anymore. That's got a bunch of them up in arms. And, apparently word is getting out about you're banning all semiautomatic weapons. I tried to warn you about getting into banning legitimate hunting firearms."

"Now look, if you don't want to carry out my orders," Kerry said, "Chuckie is dying to be the Secretary of DHS. As far as that goes, Hillary wouldn't mind the job either."

"What about Senator Kennedy?" the Secretary asked.

"What about Teddy?" Kerry chuckled. "Someone came up with a warehouse full of high quality liquor and the Senator hasn't been seen since. I think he found someplace here in the Mountain to drink in private. No, you can forget about Teddy. Probably has some bimbo with him too, if I'm any judge of character."

"When do you want to go to Vegas?" the Secretary asked.

“Make it next week,” Kerry replied, “And Mr. Secretary, get Terry and me separate suites. Some of those bimbos in Vegas are pretty easy on the eyes.”

“Yes sir,” the Secretary said shaking his head.

The hotel in Vegas was accustomed to requests for separate suites. It seemed that the Clintons frequently had gotten separate suites while they were in Vegas. And a friendly bellhop had provided bimbos to both suites. Go figure, maybe Fleataxi knew something about Hillary that the rest of us had missed.

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In Palmdale things were fairly quiet for the moment. The ATF had been in looking for all of those arms stolen from the southland armories by the gangsters, but none of them had shown up, yet. They tried to run another sting on the gun dealers too, but just knowing that the ATF was in town kept Sandy on the straight and narrow. She wouldn't even sell anything to her regular customers, claiming she had completely sold out of stock on everything. And when the ATF Agent asked her about semiautomatic weapons, she told them that she had stopped selling them because she'd heard a rumor that they had been outlawed. They asked to see her firearms log, but Sandy pointed out that her store on Avenue Q that had been burned down. The Fire Department, she said, had told her that they suspected arson.

The ATF brought in FEMA to lend them a hand. They were convinced that those military weapons were here in Palmdale. An informant had supplied them with a list, purported of the members of the Palmdale Militia, for a handsome price. And, when they started door-to-door searches of the homes of the names on the list, the people freely admitted to belonging to the Militia. But, to a man, those folks were only armed with bolt-action rifles or single shot weapons. The ATF did have some good luck, of a sort. They found a large pile of discarded M16 rifles in a warehouse but none of those weapons were serviceable. They also found a large assortment of empty M136 AT-4 casings, but no live weapons.

They could have brought in ground penetrating radar and metal detectors, but, Palmdale was a large community and frankly, they had no idea where to begin looking. Someone had said something about those boys out at Moon Shadows, but when the ATF got there, they couldn't see any sign of the shelters that the person claimed were in the back yards. It had only taken a few inches of dirt and some transplanted flowers to completely hide the entrances to Randy and Gary's shelters. While they were at it, they did a house-to-house search too. Nineteen of the families claimed that the other 20 families, purportedly the other families were on something called the A list, were armed to the teeth with everything from grenades to rockets to machineguns. But the agents found nothing to give them a hint that it was the case and they left, chalking the information up to a bunch of malcontents.

The Captain at Plant 42 had resigned his commission rather than be subject to military discipline for doing nothing wrong. The Sheriff, after much heart and soul searching, went along with Johnny's suggestion that the A list folks be made Reserve Deputy Sheriff's. Johnny had the personal pleasure of issuing the new Reserve Deputy badges and swearing everyone in. He took note of the fact that Gary had been reading his own fiction and had concealed the entrance to the shelter just like he'd concealed the entrance to the big tunnel in his first story, *The Ark*. It was a shame that the ATF and FEMA didn't read the Patriot Fiction at the Frugal Squirrel website. Had they done so, they would have known most of Gary's secrets and gimmicks.

Some of those 19 families in 'the other side' finally got tired of the hassle and put their homes on the market and moved out of Moon Shadows just to get away from the open hostility of the A list folks. They all moved into a vacant apartment building closer to the high school where FEMA issued the food. Gary dug out the C, C & R's for the Moon Shadows housing tract and made a few revisions on his computer. These revised C, C & R's were provided to the Realtors who had the for sale signs posted on the vacant 19 homes. Most of the Realtors just put the document in the file without looking at them. One or two took time to skim the documents, however, and made some interesting discoveries. Shocking would be more like it; the documents clearly included several provisions that violated California and US discrimination laws. But there was a tremendous housing shortage, the sellers were anxious to sell and it wasn't difficult to find blue-collar working stiffs who actually had a job and were unopposed to firearms. The 19 homes sold quickly and the buyers seemed to fit in well at Moon Shadows.

The homes went for a significantly reduced price despite the housing shortage. And, the sellers were so anxious to sell that they took the first offer that came along, that covered the balance of their mortgages and the realtor's commissions. That sort of po'd the realtors'; the homes could have brought so much more, increasing their commissions. But the housing market was booming with people trying to avoid moving back to the San Fernando Valley and the realtors moved on to sell other homes.

"I thought I'd seen it all Gar-Bear," Ron said, "What made you think you could get away with changing those C, C, & R's like you did?"

"Nothing in particular Ronald," Gary chuckled, "But I figured it was worth a try. The court system in California is virtually non-existent since 12Nov05, so those homes would have gone empty for an awful long time while someone tried to fight the provisions I added. Besides, it worked, didn't it? We have our nice blue-collar neighborhood back and everyone has a job and almost all of them have a reasonable number of firearms."

"It didn't seem to change the racial mix much," Clarence said, "I knowed we could get black and Hispanics that were hard working blue-collar class people. Some people just assume that if you're black or Hispanic you aren't a member of the silent majority of hard-working citizens."

"Anyone who doesn't fit in won't last long," Gary said. "We need to bring our new neigh-

bors up to speed on all of the preparations we've made in Moon Shadows. It wouldn't do for someone or someone's kid to get hurt by some of those preparations. And while we're at it, we have more than enough Assault Rifles to go around, so when we're sure that people are appropriate to have an Assault Rifle, we can arm them and they can become members of the Guard Force. We're going to end up with everyone in this housing tract being a Reserve Deputy Sheriff before it's all said and done."

"What's your definition of 'appropriate'?" Clarence asked.

"I don't know Clarence," Gary said, "I suppose anyone who belongs to the NRA ought to be given an automatic pass. But that's just my opinion and I'm wrong as often as I'm right. Why don't we do like we did before and have our personnel experts, Ron and Patti, get to know the people and make recommendations to the Council?"

"Works for me, Gar-Bear," Ron acknowledged.

The Three Amigos – Chapter 15 – Long Day's Journey Into Night

Long Day's Journey Into Night (1962) Starring Katharine Hepburn gave an explosive account into author Eugene O'Neill's explosive home life, fused by a drug-addicted mother, a father who wallows in drink after realizing he is no longer a famous actor and an older brother who is emotionally unstable and a misfit. The family was reflected by the youngest son, who was a sensitive and aspiring writer. The Great American Family at its worst. James Tyrone is an aging actor and skinflint whose miserliness has been the ruin of his family. His wife, Mary, has been a morphine addict since the birth of their youngest son, Edmund. Their eldest son, Jamie is an alcoholic, unable and unwilling to find work on his own, he has been 'forced' to take up his father's profession. Edmund, who has been away as a sailor has returned home sick and awaits the doctor's diagnosis of consumption. Each of them is so self-centered, and self-pitying, that they cannot help one-another. None of them even know what they want and they can't bear it.

In this story the expression had an entirely different meaning. It referred to the passage of the country from a country of men ruled by laws into a country ruled by men rather than the laws. Even worse, those very men used those very laws to rule the country. Confused? You shouldn't be, just imagine what would happen if some despot were in charge of the country and was generating laws to satisfy his own version of how things should be. No names, but just imagine what could happen. A fella could be talking about Dubya or John Kerry or perhaps even Chuckie or Hillary or Teddy. Maybe even some of the extreme right-wingers who made it to Congress but never to the White House, er, Mt. Weather. Imagine the possibilities... A takeoff from a movie, *Roswell* (1999) hilarious dialogue.

Mt. Weather...

"Good morning Mr. President," Chuckie said, "I can't begin to tell you how much I appreciate your appointing me as the new Secretary of Homeland Security. Say, what's that song you're humming, it sounds familiar, but I can't place it?"

"Chuckie," Kerry replied, "It's *Impossible Dream* from *Man of La Mancha*. What do you have for me today?"

"We tried cutting the food from 1,200 calories per day to 1,000 calories per day," Chuckie said, "But that's splitting the hair a little too fine. So, we went to 900 calories instead."

"Well, Americans are too fat for their own good anyway Chuck," Kerry chuckled, "But we won't be able to keep that up for long. How's the planting coming in the Midwest?"

"They've barely gotten started Mr. President," Chuck Schumer, former junior Senator from the state of New York, explained. "We won't really know until this fall how much food we'll have to distribute. We have people crying for food, Mr. President."

"Well, like Josephine said," Kerry pronounced, "Let them eat cake."

“That was Marie Antoinette, Mr. President,” Chuck said, “And a recent biographer claims that *Let them eat cake* was actually spoken by Marie-Therese, wife of France’s Louis XIV, 100 years before Marie Antoinette, but no one couldn’t find anything online to corroborate this. Ultimately, we will probably never know who uttered this infamous phrase.”

“It doesn’t matter who said it Chuck,” Kerry snapped.

“Of course not Mr. President,” Schumer replied.

“Did the ATF and FEMA ever come up with those missing weapons in Palmdale?” Kerry asked.

“No sir and we did house-to-house searches, ran another sting operation on the gun dealers and about everything we could think of,” Schumer replied.

“Those weapons have to be somewhere,” Kerry insisted, “They can’t have all just disappeared. Just what I need is some burg out in California, home of liberal ideas, armed to the teeth with military style weapons. And, in the Antelope Valley, no less. My advisors tell me that when I was over in Vietnam saving Democracy, the Antelope Valley was a hotbed of militia groups.”

“That was a long time ago Mr. President,” Schumer replied. “I’ve heard those reports, but over the years, the militias seemed to disappear with the influx of people from Los Angeles.”

“They probably just went underground Chuck,” Kerry said. “Send the ATF and FEMA and the FBI and the CIA if you have to. We need to find the militiamen who have the weapons.”

“Actually, the Palmdale Militiamen all admitted to membership,” Schumer explained, “But they were armed with bolt-action and single shot rifles and they are technically still legal.”

“I can issue another Executive Order and take care of that oversight,” Kerry said.

“Probably wouldn’t do you any good Mr. President,” Schumer replied. “Those weapons would just disappear like the automatic weapons.”

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Was Charles Schumer, the new Secretary of Homeland Security smarter than he looked? Probably not, but even buffoons get lucky from time to time or make a smart guess. Ron and Patti had taken time to get to know each family that had moved into Moon Shadows. There wasn’t a ringer in the lot. Gary had even taken the time to get to

know the new neighbors and though he had trouble with names, got so he recognized everyone. The M16s and assorted weapons were issued to each family and some time was spent at the firing range east a mile or two getting the people familiar with the weapons. Johnny had shown up with a pickup full of military ammo seized from the gangsters from time to time when he came to visit his kids. If there was one thing Palmdale wasn't short of, it was 5.56 ammo. They weren't particularly short on anything except for stuff like Armor, the tracked kind.

With the gang threat removed, the Army no longer saw fit to guard Plant 42 either. And except for the food shortage, Palmdale was returning to normal. Lots of people planted 'victory' gardens that year to fill in for the food shortages. The heirloom seeds were especially in demand and some folks, like Gar-Bear, had a good assortment from places like Walton Feed. Gary had never thought he'd end up farming again and he didn't. He provided the seeds and others provided the labor. Being preparedness freaks had its advantages, too. The Three Amigos got a jump on most people in Palmdale and had gotten more than enough quart jars, lids and rings. Pressure cookers weren't in great supply and Gary had a couple of those blue granite colored canners that they used for canning some of the veggies. But, I'm getting ahead of the story.

01May06...

"It sure does seem like a shame to till up that sod on the east end of your lawn, Gary," Clarence said.

"That's the part over the septic field Clarence," Gary explained. "The pipes are deep enough, barely, to filter out the bacteria and there hasn't been any use of the field for a while so we should get a good crop off that patch. And rototilling the ground twice is doing a pretty good job of breaking up the sod."

"What kinds of food are you planting?" Clarence asked.

"The label says that each can contains 1 each seed packet of tomato, carrot, squash, cabbage, onion, zucchini, Swiss chard, cucumber, lettuce, radish, pepper, beet, spinach, and 4 packets each of beans, peas and corn," Gary read. "I don't care for some of those things, but I'm a picky eater. I don't think that anything will go to waste."

"What about things like spuds?" Clarence asked.

"I carefully dried the potato peelings with eyes in them," Gary explained. "Back when I was going to Law School, my brother tossed a pan of potato peelings on a pile of grass and they sprouted. Even if I only get a few of those eyes to sprout, we'll get some potatoes."

"Well if it works, good," Clarence said, "And if it don't I guess we'll just keep doing without spuds."

“The real problem is that we’ve been out of meat for a while,” Gary said. “I should have put in a larger freezer, but I had no idea that the situation would take this long to resolve.”

“What are you going to do, start raising cattle?” Clarence chuckled.

“No, not me, pal, I left the farm for good in 19 and 52,” Gary said. “But when I was in college in Waverly, Iowa, I cut meat for old Huey up in Nashua. The cheap SOB only started me out at 50 cents an hour and acted like he was doing me a favor to pay me a buck an hour. But, I did learn to cut meat, so every cloud seems to have a silver lining.”

“What you mean by that?” Clarence asked.

“We can buy us a beef if we can find one and I can cut up the meat,” Gary announced. “Sharon bought the grinder attachment for her Kitchen Aide mixer so we can even make ground beef.”

“Don’t meat have to age before you cut it up?” Clarence asked.

“We can hang the meat in the shelter and leave the door to the freezer open Clarence,” Gary replied. “The ambient temperature of the shelter is about 56 degrees so the freezer should keep it pretty darned cold down there. In fact, I expect we’ll have to close the lid on the freezer from time to time to keep the shelter from freezing up. I’ll have to move the radio equipment and such out while we age the meat, but that’s only temporary.”

“Don’t you need power tools to cut up meat?” Clarence asked.

“It makes it a lot easier, but they used to use hand saws before those band saws came along,” Gary explained. “I can get by in a pinch. When I was a little kid living on the farm north of Greene, I saw a butcher cutting up pork chops with a cleaver once. But in all the time I worked for Huey, I could never get the hang of using a cleaver. It won’t be pretty, but I have the saw for my miter box and I’m going to use it to cut the meat if we can find some.”

“How long you going to age the meat?” Clarence asked.

“I don’t know a lot on the subject partner,” Gary said, “But here goes. Carcasses or meat are aged by holding them at refrigeration temperatures for extended periods of time after slaughter and initial chill. Aging (or conditioning as it is called in many countries) improves the tenderness and flavor of meat. There are two methods for aging meat: wet aging and dry aging.”

“Dry aging is much more expensive and takes longer than wet aging. Meat that is dry aged is hung in a very clean, temperature and humidity-controlled cooler for a period of two to four weeks. During this time, enzymes within the meat break down the muscle and connective tissue making it tender. Moisture is lost from the outer parts of the car-

cass causing an inedible crust to form, which must be trimmed off and discarded. The carefully controlled environment, the time involved, and the loss of outer portions of the carcass make dry aging a costly process,” Gary said, “But that’s our only choice. Wet aging occurs when meat and its own juices are vacuum packed in plastic and boxed for distribution. Because the plastic packaging does not allow loss of moisture, the meat may absorb more moisture, which results in an increase in juiciness and tenderness. Both methods of aging work well and can create a better product. The difference is that dry aging gives a more distinctive flavor while wet aging is much less costly and allows for a quicker entry to the market and therefore a much longer shelf-life.”

“That doesn’t answer my question,” Clarence said.

“Two weeks, Clarence,” Gary replied.

“Now that’s an answer that I can understand,” Clarence chuckled. “Why is it you have to turn every question into a lecture subject?”

“It must be the school teacher in me,” Gary laughed.

Clarence wisely let the subject drop. He got together with Ron and the two of them started scouring the area in and around Palmdale looking for beef on the hoof. During early June, they finally found a farmer who was willing to part with a couple of steers, for a price. They agreed to pay the sum demanded and the farmer agreed to deliver the two cattle. The deed was done and that led to a series of problems that had to be solved. There was some discussion about the proper way to kill the beef, but Gary solved that with his Vaquero. There was some discussion about bleeding the meat out, but Chris solved that with his shop hoist and a sharp knife. There was the question of skinning the beef but Gary had been a trapper when he went to college and cut meat, so he did his best. Then they used a handsaw and cut the carcasses in half and then into quarters. The beef ended up in the shelter being aged and Gary scraped the hides with some assistance from others and they brain tanned the hides just like Fleataxi wrote about in *North to Alaska* or was it *Escape From The Rat Race* or both?

Butcher paper and tape were easy enough to come by; Costco had everything but food and some other essentials. So, after the meat had hung for 10-days, Gary started to butcher the meat. You’ll have to realize that butcher is exactly the right term. Gary hadn’t really cut meat for a living since 1969 and the carcasses got butchered all right, and that ain’t a compliment. Gary’s freezer wasn’t large enough by far for 4 sides of beef, and it didn’t hold one. But he had the freezers on his refrigerators and they were pretty bare. The other 3 quarters of beef were distributed around the housing tract, making The Three Amigos residents of the year. The other residents had to open the packages to see what was inside in many cases. In Iowa, in 1969, they had different names for a lot of those cuts of meat. Gary had never heard of a tri-tip or a watermelon roast until he moved to California. And, to be perfectly honest, he still didn’t know exactly where they came from on the beef. But once it was roasted, just what in the hell difference did it make?

[A Watermelon Roast goes by many different names: Diamond-cut Roast, Full Rump, Manhattan Roast, Melon Roast, Rump Tail, Round Tip Roast, Rump Roast, Rump Tri-angle, Wedge-cut Rump Roast, Sirloin Tip Roast... A George C. Roast. It's also called the Tri-Tip.]

"Those are pretty skimpy steaks you cut, Gar-Bear," Ron suggested.

"You eat too large of a piece of meat anyway Ronald," Gary countered. "Those are boneless 8-ounce steaks and if you don't like them, give yours to Clarence. I don't hear him complaining about the size of the steaks."

"Eight-ounce?" Ron bellowed, "I never ordered anything smaller than a 12-ounce steak in my life."

"Yeah, I can see that for myself, partner," Gary replied. "It's right up front for everyone to see."

"I've been losing weight, I'll have you know," Ronald said.

"You hat is a little loose on your head, partner," Gary laughed, "I think I know where you've been losing the weight from."

"Haven't we had this discussion before?" Clarence asked.

"Your memory isn't very good Clarence," Gary said. "The previous discussion was about the size of my ass and my head, not Ronald's."

"That's right, I remember," Clarence agreed. "He's right Ron, you do sort of have a fat, uh, everything."

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21Jun06...

Stringbean, aka Clarence, was more than a little disappointed in his 2 amigos. It seemed that sometimes Ron could dish it out, but just couldn't take it. Gary had been right about Ron and so had he for that matter. Ron was a little on the pudgy side at 5' 5" and 230 pounds, but Ron claimed it was all 'muscle'. Most of Ron's muscle was between his ears, at times. Clarence had bowed out of the discussion after he'd put his foot in it. Gary was being pretty reasonable about the whole thing, but Ron was another story. What they needed here was a crisis to bring them back together. Clarence, did I ever tell you about God's sense of humor?

Around 10am, the whole darned federal government showed up at Moon Shadows. You had the ATF, the BIA, the CIA, the DIA, the EPA, FEMA and everything almost up to the

letter Z. The BIA? Well, they'd probably heard that Gary liked Indians and were checking to see if he was holding any Indians as slaves. Every single house in the tract was searched from top to bottom. They had that ground penetrating radar and metal detectors and it didn't take them long to find Gary and Randy's shelters, either. What they didn't find was a single illegal firearm; or, for that matter, a single legal firearm, either. Now, if they had just checked out east of Palmdale a mile or two at what the boys used for a shooting range, they'd have come away fat. And to make matters worse, the Sheriff of Los Angeles County had made every adult in the housing tract Reserve Deputy Sheriff's. So, unless they came up with actual stolen military hardware, these folks could legally own all sorts of things.

It occurred to the feds that they must have a leak somewhere, but with so many agencies involved, they didn't know where to start looking for the stoolie. After much debate and arguing, mostly among themselves, the alphabet departed to harass the Palmdale Militia. Now the raid accomplished 2 things. It seemed pretty clear that these people either didn't have any firearms or had found an awfully good hiding place. Moreover, it settled the running dispute within the ranks of The Three Amigos.

"I'm sorry you have a fat butt, Ronald," Gary said.

"Think nothing of it partner," Ron said, "I could stand to lose 5 pounds."

Five? Let it be Gary, you just put one over on him anyway. Ron thought you said you were sorry that you said he had a fat butt...

My fellow Americans, Kerry started.

We have a problem in this great land of ours. (Oh, really?) Until the harvest is completed this late summer and fall, we have a tremendous shortage of food. We realize that many of you have planted gardens to tide you over and you are to be commended. I assure you that as soon as the food enters the distribution network we will increase the ration up from the present 1,500 calories to the previous 1,800.

But I come before you tonight not with regard to the food crisis, but because of the firearms crisis. I have issued Executive Orders to restrict slightly the public ownership of firearms. I fail to see why someone needs an automatic weapon to hunt deer. (That's semi-auto, dummy.) This administration is aware of several groups around this country who believe that they have a right to form a militia and arm themselves. This is a gross misinterpretation of the 2nd Amendment. Congress has not seen fit to enact the Assault Weapons Ban I proposed. I have, in accordance with the powers granted me by the USA Patriot Act and the Domestic Security Enhancement Act, issued certain Executive Orders. Pursuant to those Executive Orders, all full and semi-automatic weapons must be surrendered to your local authorities. Provisions of other Executive Orders I have been forced to issue have been made known to the appropriate authorities charged with enforcing those orders. (What, it's a secret? How can we obey if we don't know what the new rules are?)

As some of you may know, I found it necessary to replace the Secretary of Homeland Security with a real American Patriot. Charles Schumer, the former junior Senator from the great state of New York is now the Secretary of the Homeland Security Department. Secretary Schumer assures me that the Department of Homeland Security will do everything in its power to remove those Assault Weapons from the hands of the American public. I ask that all of you cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security in this effort to clear these deadly weapons from our streets.

The cleanup of the cities attacked by the terrorists this past November 12th is now complete. Your government will continue to rebuild the public buildings destroyed during those attacks. The insurance industry has informed this administration that they would be unable to fully honor the many claims that have been filed as a result of those attacks. To ensure a fair and equitable settlement for all parties involved, (big business with deep pockets) all claims will be prorated at 33 cents on the dollar, with certain exceptions. (big business with deep pockets, again)

My fellow Americans, we are all in this together. No person is more equal than any other person. If we pull together, the United States of America will be reborn as a stronger and more powerful nation. Beware of the man who would tell you that the old way was the best way. These are different times America, and some of those guarantees that the founders of this country thought necessary are no longer appropriate in a nation of the 21st Century.

Thank you and good night.

“Was that John Kerry or George Orwell that we just listening to?” Gary asked. “It sounds to me as if Kerry has a new speechwriter. It has been a long time since I read the book (Animal Farm). Any opinions fellas?”

“Who was George Orwell?” Clarence asked. “I know the name, but can’t put a face on it.”

“George Orwell wrote a book called *Animal Farm*,” Gary said.

“I remember, that was where the pigs was in charge and *All Animals Are Equal / But Some Are More Equal than Others*,” Clarence announced.

“That’s the book, Clarence,” Gary said. “I found the remark that Kerry made to be of great interest.”

“Which remark?” Ron asked.

“No person is more equal than any other person,” Gary replied. “Everything else he said seemed to contradict that remark.”

"It almost sounds to me like you have an agenda Gar-Bear," Ron said, "What is it that you're trying to sell?"

"The same thing I've been trying to sell all along Ron, preparedness," Gary replied. "I'm trying to prepare the two of you for the eventuality that someday, someone will get in power in this country and will use the laws of this country to bring it down. Let's face it; the law was simple at one time. Now, something is either obscene or not obscene depending upon the community that you live in. Rather than address such fundamental questions of what's naughty and what's nice, the Supreme Court begged the question."

"What does that have to do with the President's speech tonight?" Ron asked.

"Don't you find it a little bit convenient that he used one lie to introduce another?" Gary asked.

"What are you talking about, Gary?" Clarence asked.

"The present 1,500 calories to the previous 1,800 calories," Gary said. "You know that we've never gone on the food dole, but I've seen what they hand out as 1,500 calories. If it's 1,000 calories, I'd be shocked. Now assuming that was the lead-in lie, he moved right into that attack on the 2nd Amendment. He disputes that a well-regulated militia is necessary to preserve the state and uses that as a springboard to take away our fire-arms. And I don't believe for one minute that the insurance companies can't do better than 33 cents on the dollar. You would expect some reduction, but that is ridiculous. And finally, he was off with the Orwellian crap about everyone being equal. Whenever someone starts talking like that, I get nervous."

"We did have half the housing tract sitting on their behinds living off the dole," Ron agreed.

"And where is the money coming from to pay for the dole, Ron?" Gary asked. "You were commenting in April about not paying taxes because there was no way to mail in your return. Did the government suddenly plant a money tree or are they taking from some and giving to others?"

"Don't the government always do that?" Clarence asked.

"To some extent of course, Clarence, but it's been getting steadily worse since the great depression and FDR getting into office," Gary said. "You fellas shouldn't have gotten me wound up. I get mad just thinking about welfare and all those people living off the middle class. Every time they cut taxes, they just create more loopholes for the rich and cut the taxes of the poor and who gets stuck? Us; the middle class and the little guy in the middle. Bill Gates makes a jillion dollars, but he tax shelters a bunch of it with his foundation. And what's the maximum tax rate? 39.6% last time I looked. If you're making 10 billion dollars a year, who cares if you only get to hold on to 6 billion of it? Six billion is still a lot of money."

“Gary you need to take a Xanax or something,” Ron suggested.

“I need to go out to that shooting range and get my Super Match and head for Mt. Weather is what I need to do Ron,” Gary said. “But I won’t. There’s no need to. Unless Mr. Kerry is able to fix the election in 2008, he’ll be out of here and we’ll just have some other heartache to deal with.”

“You make it sound as if there isn’t much hope my friend,” Ron said.

“Ronald, hope is the only thing we have,” Gary replied, “But we can hope until Fleataxi stops holding his breath and we won’t be a bit better off than we are. Unless the people of this country take matters into their own hands, there might not be a country by 2008.”

“You’re talking about another revolution, Gary,” Clarence said.

“You darn tooting I’m talking about another revolution Clarence,” Gary replied. “I may be wrong and if I am, I won’t get much support from the population as a whole. If I’m right, and I think I am, once we get the ball started rolling, it will be like a snowball rolling downhill gathering in size and momentum. Now, the simple question is, ‘Are you with me or against me?’ I won’t hold a grudge if you don’t want to join in. But, I’m going to talk to some people and see if we can get the ball rolling.”

“Well hell,” Ron said, “You can’t live forever can you, count me in.”

“Me too, Gary,” Clarence said, “We’ve been in this thing together for a long time. It’s The Three Amigos, and don’t you forget it.”

The Three Amigos – Chapter 16 – What We've Got Here Is...

*In a bar in Toledo across from the depot
On a bar stool she took off her ring
I thought I'd get closer so I walked on over
I sat down and asked her name
When the drinks finally hit her she said I'm no quitter
But I finally quit livin' on dreams
I'm hungry for laughter and here ever after
I'm after what-ever the other life brings*

*In the mirror I saw him and I closely watched him
I thought how he looked out of place
He came to the woman who sat there beside me
Had a strange look on his face
The big hands were calloused he looked like a mountain
For a minute I thought I was dead
But he started shaking his big heart was breaking
He turned to the woman and said*

*You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille
With four hungry children and a crop in the field
I've had some bad times lived through some sad times
But this time your hurting won't heal
You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille*

*After he left us I ordered more whisky
I thought how she'd made him look small
From the lights of the bar room to a rented hotel room
We walked without talking at all
She was a beauty but when she came to me
She must have thought I'd lost my mind
I couldn't hold her 'cos the words that he told her
Kept coming back time after time*

You picked a fine time to leave me Lucille....

... failure to communicate. Cool Hand Luke (1967) and, Anything so innocent and built like that just gotta be named Lucille. (George Kennedy, same movie)

How does a revolution get started? Where does a revolution get started, might be the more correct question. A revolution starts in the heart and in the mind of someone who just has plain had enough. A revolution is an idea that, like a bean, puts down a root and puts up a shoot. With nurturing, the bean, like the revolution, grows. It starts small, but in the light of day, and even during the darkness of night, grows to a more respectable size. And like any growing plant, it begins to bear fruit. The fruit might be small at

first, barely a little ball behind a large blossom. But in time, the little ball gets bigger, just like that snowball rolling down the snowy slope. The ball gets bigger and gains momentum. And, the fruit, be it a pod of beans or a round little berry that turns red, grows. And before you know it, you have a mature bean ready for picking. A bright red strawberry, hard, but softening as the berry matures and the sugar comes out. And when the berry is fully matured, it is sweet, oh so sweet.

What does a farm wife named Lucille have to do with The Three Amigos? Nothing that I can think of; that was an accidental find while I was looking for something else and I happen to like Kenny Rogers. But what that Warden said in *Cool Hand Luke* and Luke repeated at the end of the movie is important. What John Kerry had in the early summer of 2006 was a major communications problem. He might have thought he was doing the right thing, what liberal doesn't? But in reality, he was walking all over the Constitution and the American people and the American people were hungry and tired and starting to get very, very angry. Lincoln said, *You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.* John Kerry was lying to all of the people all of the time and Lincoln said that you couldn't do that. Or, do I misinterpret? But, what the hell, Lincoln was a Republican, so what did he know?

Who, what, why, where, when and how are the classic questions. Never ask why, or so they taught me in school. The only *correct* answer to why is, why not? Let's deal with when, it is a good starting point. When does a revolution begin? When some middle-aged, average guy had been through the most horrific experience in his life and survived only to have to end up fighting for his life and doing things he would never have done otherwise. When that same middle-aged, average guy has been lied to, blatantly for so long that he begins to see plots within plots within plots and has had enough. When his two best friends in the world agree with his interpretation of the events. That tacit agreement is when the revolution really begins. It's long before anyone picks up a weapon and takes action. It is when reasonable people agree that they have no choice but to use force to combat a perceived evil.

And what do these middle-aged, average and otherwise reasonable guys do? Do they grab their guns and grenades and rush off half-cocked to fight the forces of evil? Not hardly; they're older now and not so spry as they once were. They tend to their garden, that's what they do. They plant the seed, the idea, among other like-minded people and let the seed germinate and grow. The like-minded people are their friends and neighbors, fertile soil for the seed to germinate in.

They carefully tend that now germinating seed making sure that the ground is free of weeds and that the seed has a chance to grow. And sometimes the seed takes very good root in the soil of discontent and grows at a surprising rate. Those friends and neighbors talk to other friends and pretty soon that little seed becomes a grapevine, spreading out. And, in the US of A in the early summer of 2006, there were a lot of people like The Three Amigos around the county; people who were tired and hungry and didn't like to be lied to. From Atlanta to Seattle and from San Diego to Portland, there

were many gardeners, tending the garden that would spawn a second revolution.

How does such a thing happen? Like anything else it needs a trigger. Was the trigger the lies emanating from on high? Was the trigger the terrorist attack? Did it go back further than that to perhaps even before The Three Amigos were born, like in the time of the Great Depression when the US suddenly took on a socialist bent? Who knows the real how? It may beg the question, but there's an answer there, no matter how elusive.

And what of the rest of the world, one might logically ask? Where have they been during the hours, days, weeks and months since 12Nov05? Lending a hand, of course, that's where they've been. But sometimes this hand-lending thing goes too far and surprisingly, even shockingly, when the United Nations, offered to lend a helping hand, it came in the form of Peacekeepers. Not aid, or medical assistance, although they were part of a PACKAGE deal, but Peacekeepers to restore order in the good old US of A. Maybe the US's longtime allies like France and Germany were behind the UN's offer; they were still piqued over Iraq. Maybe Russia saw an opportunity to defeat a country with which it had waged a war that lasted from WW II to the 1990's. But, in a move that surprised many, Kerry rejected the UN's offer because it came with so high a price tag.

Canada and México helped, of course, and so did Great Britain. The United States had many allies and a few friends and the help came. The helpful bound the wounds arising from the attack and tended to the ill. But the countries were limited in their abilities to help and in time, when all of the bandages had been applied and their resources exhausted, and it was a matter of cleaning up a few remaining sites and rebuilding, the Canadians, Méxicans and British left to deal with their own demons and needs. The terrorists had their own snowball they were trying to roll downhill and countries that aided the US began to experience their own nightmares, except, perhaps on a somewhat smaller scale. And, while they couldn't exactly put a finger on it, there was something changing in the US and it perhaps frightened the Canadians and the Méxicans and the British.

First there had been that gang unrest and an apparent reluctance on the part of the US administration to get involved. Then, there was the fiasco over the food. It was apparent to most outside observers that Kerry was lying about the food. But, that was an internal matter within the US and besides, there were hungry Méxicans and Canadians and British and what about the people in Sudan? No country was willing to interfere in an internal matter of what was still the most powerful nation on the planet or risk having an American Carrier Task Group off their shores. On the eve of the 230th Birthday Party for the Declaration of Independence, America found itself quite alone in the world. Since the end of the Cold War, the US was seen by many to be the dominate power in the world and after Clinton's Peace Dividend and the abortive deal in Somalia, and after the attack on the WTC on 9/11 and Bush's subsequent War on Terror, America had lost the respect of some, perhaps many, and those arrogant, Ugly Americans could go it alone. We've all heard the expression, 'The Shot Heard Round the World'. But what of the second shot heard round the world?

The second shot heard round the world wouldn't be so dramatic nor draw much notice. In fact many would fail to recognize it for just that, the beginning of the second American Revolution. It wasn't April 19, 1775 and it didn't happen on the Lexington Green and spread to Concord. It was July 4, 2006 and it was 10:06am and it was in California. It occurred when some heavy-handed alphabet agency goons pushed the wrong people on the wrong day at the wrong time. And it didn't involve The Three Amigos, at least not directly. It occurred when some poor slob didn't have a chance to hide his illegal M16 rifle and rather than allow himself to be arrested, shot a couple of the goons and his neighbors, also members of the Palmdale Militia, joined in and killed the other goons.

It occurred at 12:01pm in Lubbock, Texas under similar circumstances on the same day. It occurred in Mississippi and Georgia and Virginia and in so many other cities, but all on the same day, 04Jul06. The second shot heard round the world wasn't heard all that far from the actual shooting and it was a series of events, not a single shot, just as had happened on Lexington Green and at the Bridge at Concord. There had been many shots fired on April 19, 1775. There were many shots fired on July 4, 2006. One would have thought the feds would take the occasion of the 230th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence off. But no, it was the perfect time to make raids on some unsuspecting people who were high on the feds radar. Or on second thought, maybe it was the worst possible time. "Jacta alea est – The die is cast", supposedly utter by Julius Caesar on crossing the river Rubicon to invade Italy in 49 BC.

The die was cast on that July day and once cast, there was no turning back. The Three Amigos heard about the shootings later in the day. They were eating fried chicken, a treat, and fresh veggies from their garden and having a pretty good time of it. There was ample iced tea, food and perhaps even the occasional can of beer or soda. The entire housing tract had turned out for a monster block party to celebrate Independence Day. In one front yard a net was up and kids of all ages were engaged in a volleyball match. In another yard, two of the new neighbors were tossing horseshoes of all things. There was the softball game across the street in the open field and the 3 friends were sitting at a table with an umbrella in front of Gary's house. The gate was propped open and kids were constantly being reminded to 'be careful of the barbed wire'.

There was that wasn't there? Barbed wire around Gary and Chris and Dick and Randy's homes; it was a constant reminder that all was not perfect in the world or even in the country. And during the early afternoon Johnny came by. The Three Amigos saw him and thought he was there to spend some time with his kids. But, to their surprise, Johnny pulled up right in front of Gary's and came out of his patrol car with a, was it determined, look on his face. There wasn't much to tell.

Earlier that day, some ATF people thought they had the goods on one of the Palmdale Militiamen and they'd gone barging in on a no knock search and caught the guy red handed with a M16. The militiaman had just finished cleaning his weapon and had no sooner inserted a fresh magazine in the weapon than his front door burst open. He chambered a round and fired before the ATF boys were able to get off a round. His M16 was an older model with full auto and he'd moved the selector to full, chambered the

round and fired in the blink of an eye. The two feds went down, the fusillade of fire penetrating their level II vests or perhaps catching them in the face, Johnny never said.

When the militiamen's neighbor's, also members of the Militia heard the firing, their weapons appeared, as if by magic, and they finished what their neighbor had started. And, in Palmdale, California at approximately 10:06am, the die was cast. And in the intervening hours, reports of other shootings around the country had begun to surface on the now restored computer network used by law enforcement.

"I do believe that it has begun," Gary announced.

"The Revolution?" Clarence asked.

"What else would old Gar-Bear be talking about, partner?" Ron asked. "That has been the entire subject of conversation around this place since John Kerry made that stupid speech about *Animal Farm*."

"I've got some good news and some bad news," Gary said, "What do you want to hear first?"

"Let's hear the good news, Gary," Clarence urged, "We've had enough bad news for one day."

"Gentlemen, the American people are about to recover what is rightfully theirs from a government that had turned into a tyrant," Gary stated.

"What's the bad news, Gar-Bear?" Ron asked.

"I'm too old for this crap." Gary smiled.

"You're too old?" Clarence replied, "You're the youngest of the three of us."

"I guess that makes the 2 of you too old for this crap, too," Gary acknowledged.

The questions began to fly. Where do we start? What are the ground rules? What targets do we hit and what is permissible and what is off limits? Do we hit the military or just the civilian governmental employees? Are we going to lead the fight or are we going to remain in the background and just lend our less than considerable wisdom to the fight? What about if the military decided to get involved and use tanks and jets and bombs against the revolutionaries? What, what, what? There were a lot more questions than answers on that July afternoon.

The Three Amigos sensed, rather than knew, that this was bigger than they. Johnny had made that more than evident when he described some of the events that had occurred round the country on that day. The Three Amigos didn't even have a plan. They had been out stirring up the soup so to speak, and hadn't given much thought to what

they were going to do if the sales pitch bore fruit. Most of their attention had been focused inward with an eye to protecting their families and homes and the housing tract; except for selling of the idea of a revolution, that is. But, now that you've closed the deal and sold the customer the car or the new home or the bag of steer manure, you find yourself in the position of having to deliver the goods, don't you?

With any new venture, you start small, taking those first baby steps. The Three Amigos decided that in the end the military might turn out to be their best friend so the questions of who to hit were resolved to hitting civilian employees of the government; unless the military took some action against them. And, some of those alphabet agencies came to mind immediately like ATF and FEMA, just to name their favorites. At first, it was easy, the ATF and FEMA wore jackets with A-T-F and F-E-M-A emblazoned on the back. But after a few rounds in the T and between the E and the M, they switched to jackets that said P-O-L-I-C-E. There wasn't any shortage of targets, at least not at first. ATF and FEMA were in Palmdale and other cities on a mission, but it wasn't a mission from God. Well, Kerry might dispute that, but really, it wasn't a mission from God. [Am I going to vote for Kerry in November? Can pigs fly?] The Three Amigos sat at Moon Shadows and conducted the orchestra. They really were too old to go on many missions.

"It don't seem right," Clarence said, "All those young folks is having all the fun. I gots me a \$2,000 rifle with a \$1,000 scope and 1,000-rounds of match grade ammunition and alls I gets to do is sit here directing traffic."

"You could let someone else use that rifle, you know," Ron suggested.

"Harry can't have my rifle Ron and that's final," Clarence said foreclosing that discussion.

"Well, we could take those M16A4's and a bag full of grenades and lob a few into that office the ATF and FEMA set up in the Library," Gary suggested.

"And do what, burn books?" Ron protested, "Adolph Hitler burned books; I ain't going there partner."

"We could get them when they get in those armored Suburban's they drive," Gary suggested.

"Are you sure you know how to operate that grenade launcher Gary?" Clarence asked. "I wouldn't want to get all setup to start an ambush and have you not know where the trigger was."

Gary mimicked loading a grenade into the M203 and grasped the rifle's magazine with his finger on the M203's trigger. "Good enough?" he asked.

"It would work better if you put a grenade in it," Ron chuckled.

“Haha, Ronald McDonald,” Gary said, “I’ve got your grenade right here.”

“Don’t load the darn thing now Gar-Bear,” Ron snapped, “Wait until we get to the Civic Center.”

“Load a grenade, don’t load a grenade,” Gary sing-sang, “You must think I’m a complete idiot.”

“I don’t know about the complete part,” Ron countered.

So, The Three Amigos and 3 of David’s boys left for the Civic Center well after dark. The Civic Center is located on Palmdale Boulevard at Sierra Highway, about 5.5-6 miles from Moon Shadows. There was still a curfew in effect, but only the feds were enforcing it and only when they dared run the risk. To make sure that the feds couldn’t hold them if they were stopped, everyone was wearing their Reserve Deputy badge. Gary had taken a minute or two and had switched holsters so he had his Kimber rather than the M1911 on this night. They intended to park the car about a block from the Civic Center and proceed carefully on foot. Further would have been better, but Gary insisted on wearing those darn Laredo’s and his feet hurt.

Sometimes Gary reminded his friends of the Staler Brothers song, *Flowers on the Wall* and its lyric, *Playing Solitaire ‘til dawn with the deck of 51. Was our boy 2 cans short of a six-pack?* They got into position, finally, and hunkered down to wait for some feds to come out of the office. The feds used to keep 9-5 hours, but since they’d been getting shot in the back so often, they were working 24/7. Shift change, if you can call it that, occurred around 11pm. The feds had taken to making late night, no knock searches of the Palmdale Militia folks and other people they suspected of having illegal weapons. Aware of the feds tactics, the Palmdale Militia had gone underground with their firearms and it was an exercise in futility for the feds. Where do they get these guys?

At 10:45pm, several Suburban’s pulled into the Library parking lot and the agents hurried into the building. They seemed to be agitated about something. A few minutes later the entire group rushed out of the building, the 2nd shift and the graveyard shift. Obviously something was up. The six of them opened up, first lobbing a HEDP grenade with the M203 and following on after with six weapons firing 3-round bursts, one after the other. The grenades did most of the dirty work and many of the feds were on the ground dead or mortally wounded. Those who escaped the initial onslaught moved quickly behind vehicles for cover and began to return fire with their H&K MP-5’s. We all know that The Three Amigos had M4-FA suppressors on their rifles, so there was no muzzle flash or loud sound to give away their position. Having seen the benefits of the suppressors first hand, The Three Amigos had prevailed upon Sandy to part with more of the devices and David’s boys were also using suppressed M16A2’s.

The feds didn’t have targets to shoot at so they were liberal in their fire and were hosing down the general area. The few remaining feds, inside the Library, came boiling out to help their comrades. Boiling out right into heavy fire from the 6 Moon Shadows resi-

dents. Gary wondered, "Are we having fun now, Clarence?" as he changed mags yet another time. The inevitability of the situation must have finally dawned on the feds and they made a break back for the cover of the Library. All that accomplished was make the inevitable a certainty. When the sounds of firing stopped, The Three Amigos and David's boys assumed that the feds were all down.

How many times had Gary preached, 'never assume it makes an ass out of u and me'? But, that was theory and this was real and the adrenalin was pumping about a pint a minute. They were cautious; don't get me wrong, but not cautious enough. One of the feds was playing dead but when he saw the boys administering coups de grace to his fallen friends, he took a deep breath and opened up with his MP5. Everyone was wearing Interceptor OTV with Threat Level IV TAP IV hard armor plates. The plates, at over 9 pounds, were heavy but this night they took the precaution.

A hard armor plate only does you some good if a bullet strikes the plate. The fed was on the ground, playing dead and he rolled a little and opened up. He hit legs and he hit body armor and he hit Jason on the forehead with a glancing bullet. No one was dead, although it appeared for a moment that Jason was down for the count. But, they were shot up, that much was certain. And their vehicle was at least a block away. But the door was open on one of the Suburban's so they gathered up all of the feds MP-5's, magazines and piled into that Suburban. They dropped Clarence off at their vehicle; he had escaped getting shot, and the two vehicles convoyed down Avenue R towards Moon Shadows. Sirens were everywhere as Deputy Sheriff's came to count the bodies. At Moon Shadows they were able to assess their situation. Clarence was in the clear, not a scratch on him. It figured... the whole thing had sort of been his idea. Jason had a deep gouge out of his forehead and possibly a concussion. Ron had a 9mm round go through his left leg, missing bone and blood vessels. Gary had a round in his left leg too, but it had nicked something and was bleeding profusely, although not in spurts. Josh had a graze on his leg that would heal up but leave a nasty scar and Justin had a hole in both pant legs, but no wounds.

The Suburban went into a neighbor's garage and they started tending to the wounds. This wasn't a situation where you could call your friendly family physician and have the wounds tended to. One of the new neighbor's wives was a nurse and she did the best she could to patch the people up. The grazes were easy enough and she left those to others to handle. Gary was bleeding so he got her attention first. She cleaned out the wound as best she could and determined that the bleeding was capillary in nature. She fully debrided the wound and closed each hole with a single stitch. All, I might add without the benefit of Lidocaine or anything to numb the wounds. Fortunately, Gary had passed out when she cleaned the wound initially and he didn't feel a thing. Ron then got her attention and he gritted his teeth through the whole affair, never giving in to the pain. Everyone was eventually given a starter dose of 2 500mg capsules of Keflex to ward off possible infections and some Vicodin ES for the pain.

The 6 men had scored big on their outing. Only 4 of the 6 had been shot and they had 14 MP5 9mm submachine guns, 12 serviceable. And they had all of the magazines for

all 14 weapons. They later found more magazines in the back of the Suburban when it was checked over before being driven to a drop site. The feds also had an assortment of other gear, which they helped themselves to. But the question remained had it been worth it? The submachine guns were a nice addition to their arsenal. Ron and Gary were on crutches and Josh limped pretty well. Jason did have a concussion after all, but except for the headaches, he was getting better.

"I hope your happy, Clarence," Gary growled.

"Of course I'm happy, I gots me a MP-5," Clarence replied. "And I got me 2 of those feds, too."

"That isn't what I meant and you know it," Gary growled again. "Every single one of us had bullet holes in them or their clothing except for you."

"The really humorous part about it Gar-Bear," Ron said, "Was that this thing all started with Clarence talking about his M1A rifle and we all ended up using the 5.56's"

"Next time you shoot somebody, don't go near 'em till you're... sure they're dead!" Gary said.

"I know that one," Ron said. "*El Dorado* (1966) starring John Wayne and Robert Mitchum."

"Speaking of which," Gary said, "You're as bad as Mitchum was in that movie."

"What do you mean, I liked him in that movie," Ron protested.

"I'm referring to you and that crutch, partner," Gary laughed, "You're just like Mitchum in the movie, first you put it under one arm and then under the other."

"Big deal," Ron snapped, "You really have to admire a guy who would say something like, 'I started out to be a sex fiend but couldn't pass the physical'." (Mitchum)

"Only about half the people who made that movie are dead," Gary said. "That was a re-make of *Rio Bravo* with Robert Mitchum instead of Dean Martin and James Caan instead of Ricky Nelson. When Sharon and I went to Tombstone that time, we went to the studio in Tucson where they made both movies. They actually did use the same set as many critics claimed. Only thing they did was reverse things and walked across the creek the other way."

"They did not Gar-Bear," Ron said. "You're confused again. They shot *Rio Bravo* and *Rio Lobo* on the same set and turned them around. You told me yourself after Sharon and you got home from Tucson and Tombstone."

"I did?" Gary asked. "I'm surprised I could remember it all the way home from Tucson."

GAILY bedight, A gallant knight, In sunshine and in shadow, Had journeyed long, Singing a song, In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old – This knight so bold – And o'er his heart a shadow Fell as he found No spot of ground That looked like Eldorado.

“And, as his strength Failed him at length, He met a pilgrim shadow – ‘Shadow,’ said he, ‘Where can it be – This land of Eldorado ?’

‘Over the Mountains Of the Moon, Down the Valley of the Shadow, Ride, boldly ride,’ The shade replied, - ‘If you seek for Eldorado !’

“Hey, Gary said, “That’s what James Caan was saying in the movie. Where did you find out the lines from the script?”

“I didn’t Gar-Bear,” Ron laughed, “That’s a famous poem written by none other than Edgar Allan Poe.”

“I didn’t know that,” Gary remarked.

“You don’t know a lot of this partner,” Ron laughed, “If we hadn’t run out of ANFO, none of our homemade claymores would have worked. That fella with the Lancaster Militia, Trevor was it? Anyway, he really bailed us out on that one. And just how in the hell are we going to do a revolution walking around on crutches? Explain that one to me would you?”

“What, I’m suddenly the Wizard of Oz?” Gary said. “Hell, I don’t know, I guess we’ll have to let the others do the fighting for us.”

“Send Clarence,” Ron said, “He never seems to get shot or killed off in any of your stories.”

“That’s the difference between real life and Patriot Fiction, Ron,” Gary explained. “In the fiction I get to choose who gets shot and who doesn’t. I think that last story I wrote was the first story where I even gave us a scratch, but to tell you the truth, I can’t remember.”

“You can take pills to improve your memory,” Clarence said, “I seen it on TV.”

“I used to see the ads, too Clarence,” Gary acknowledged his friend’s attempt to help, “But there isn’t any pill that will fix what’s ailing me. You might just get to find out yourself if you let your diabetes gets out of control and get neuropathy.”

It seemed as if, despite their injuries, The Three Amigos were back to normal. Their injuries would heal, perhaps in time to get them into the fight. It had taken from 19Apr75 to 04Jul76 for the founding fathers to declare Independence. And the Constitution had

taken another 11 years or so. And this wasn't quite the same as fighting a bunch of red-coat conscripts or Hessian mercenaries. This would be American against American, both groups fighting for what they believed in or thought they believed in. You could always ambush someone, but sometimes it worked out and sometimes it didn't. *Reality can destroy the dream; why shouldn't the dream destroy reality?* – George Moore

The Three Amigos would end up in the thick of it, you could count on that. They might need to take a little time to build up a head of steam, get fresh ideas, or whatever. But the fight wasn't over, it was just beginning...

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 17 – Baby Steps

Preface...

The last-minute, virtually unplanned attack on the feds at the Library had pros and cons. The guys learned that it didn't pay to go off half-cocked in search of glory. The mission was a success, in many ways; they had a dozen serviceable MP-5's with suppressors someone found in the back of the Suburban and came carrying asking, "What are these?" Fourteen of the total complement of 24, 8 per shift, feds were dead, too. They hadn't kept the Suburban because that was a little obvious. And, they'd paid a hefty price on their first outing with 4 wounded. They had learned valuable lessons and had wounds to heal. The old joke really was true; time heals all wounds and wounds all heels.

The story resumes...

"What would happen if we started a revolution and nobody came?" Clarence asked.

"What do you mean nobody came?" Ron asked, "Of course people would come, it would be a great show. I mean with the cannons booming and the Star Spangled Banner Flying playing in the background at dawn's early light and..."

"I ain't goin nowhere near no cannons," Clarence said.

"I was just making a point," Ron insisted.

"BS," Clarence replied, "You're just mad 'cause you got shot and I didn't."

"Clarence! Chill, bro," Gary commanded. "We have time to think this revolution of ours through now and make it work. I'd be willing to call that screwed up attack on the feds our first encounter in this revolution."

"We should have kept the Chevy truck," Ron said.

"A bulletproof truck would have been nice, partner," Gary said, "But it would have attracted a little too much attention for my liking."

"So, what's next?" Ron responded, "We going to Mt. Weather and shoot that SOB, Kerry?"

"Do you have any idea how much security they must have at that place?" Gary asked.

"Well, no," Ron admitted.

"Neither do I," Gary said, "But it probably would have been easier to walk into the Oval Office and shoot his butt than our trying to attack Mt. Weather."

“In that one story you told me about,” Ron said, “We killed 2 or 3 Presidents.”

“That wasn’t us, Ron,” Gary said, “I used different characters in that story and besides, it was just fiction.”

“One thing about you partner,” Ron chuckled, “Is that it’s hard to tell where the fact stops and the fiction begins.”

“Writing the fiction is just a hobby,” Gary explained, “But I’ve learned a lot in the process with all of the story research.”

“To hell with the fiction,” Clarence said having recovered from the chill command, “What are we going to do next?”

“First things first, Clarence,” Gary said, “We have to let our wounds heal.”

“So when are we really going to start the revolution?” Clarence asked.

“It’s already started, Clarence,” Ron said. “It started on the 4th of July this time. You can’t honestly believe that all of the liberals are suddenly going to become gun-toting counter-revolutionaries, can you? In my opinion, Kerry is a coward and he’ll try to get others to fight his battles for him. Look, we’re not trying to rewrite the Constitution here; all we’re trying to do is restore it and the Bill of Rights. We’re going to do that at the ballot box, not fighting in the streets. What we have to accomplish is to show the nation that the people can still have a say in their government.”

Labor Day 2006...

In the time since the raid on the Library, the bodies had healed to the point that The Three Amigos were road worthy again. Watching the problems his 2 friends experienced trying to heal from their wounds had been another sobering experience for Clarence. The feds had flooded Palmdale looking for the killers, but though they had suspicions, they didn’t even have enough information to act under USA Patriot Act II. They had all but given up searching homes in the Antelope Valley; they couldn’t find the illegal firearms and munitions. Everyone in the AV, except for the feds, knew exactly who was behind the Library Raid, as it was now called. The Palmdale Militia had figured out that they had someone with a big mouth and the person simply disappeared. He was probably at the bottom of one of those mine shafts that littered the AV.

Has anyone ever noticed how black people use words prohibited to the remainder of society? Having a black son-in-law had been an enlightening experience for Gary in many ways. Udell could use the N word with impunity, but the one time Gary had slipped and used the word, Udell had accused him of being racist. Clarence was quite a bit older than Udell and he didn’t use that disallowed word very often. But when he heard that the Palmdale Militia had routed a spy and the fella had disappeared, he had

been overheard saying, "Well, that's one N word in the woodpile that won't bother anyone again." But, Clarence was black, so he was permitted to use the forbidden word.

The Three Amigos were planning a road trip. They wanted to get a feel for the mood of the country and wanted to stir up a little crap if they thought they could get away with it. Kerry had finally cancelled martial law now that the rebuilding had started; it slowed down the contractors' work too much. The harvest was coming in and grocery stores were open. The shelves were missing many items, but the country sure was a different place than it been only a few months before. FEMA didn't have time to hand out food and medicine any more either; they were too busy trying to collect the guns. The more liberal members of society were complying, too. They were taking the \$100 being offered for firearms by the government because the government must know what was right for the people. They had probably inherited the guns, anyway.

The FBI hadn't caught many of the terrorists responsible for the 12Nov05 attacks either. They were too busy helping the ATF and FEMA sort through all the purchase records of firearms. Most gun dealers had 'fires' and the form 4473's had disappeared. The ATF is pretty tough on dealers who fail to maintain proper records, so the dealers actually made sure that there was a fire and the fire department was called. The ATF knew it was being had and had arson investigators check out every single one of those fires. Arson investigators look for, among other things, evidence of accelerants and determine the point of origin of the fire.

It seemed that a lot of gun shops were plagued with faulty wiring, but they could find no evidence of accelerants and the fires were ruled accidental. In response to all of the faulty wiring, the ATF promulgated a regulation requiring that all gun dealers have the wiring inspected at their places of business on an annual basis. Do you have any idea how much an electrician charges to perform a certified inspection of the wiring in a business in conformance with those ATF Standards? It was another loop in the noose around the government's neck.

"Now that we're healed up and able to travel," Gary observed, "We ought to be out there seeing how this revolution of ours is doing."

"It's doing just fine without us Gary," Ron announced. "I was talking to Sandy and she said that even though she had a new store, she'll have to have the electrical wiring inspected every year. She's madder than a wet hen."

"Seen Johnny lately?" Gary asked.

"Not since the 4th of July," Ron answered. "Well, I didn't see him, but he was around after the Library Raid checking up on us."

"Did they tell him we got all shot up?" Gary asked.

"No, they told him I was having a brief problem with my heart and you were in bed with

your diabetes,” Ron explained. “I’m not sure that he believed anyone, but he’s on our side, remember?”

“When are we leaving on our road trip?” Clarence asked.

“How about a week from today, Clarence,” Gary suggested, “Monday the 11th of September.”

“Where are we going first?” Clarence asked.

“I sort of figured we’d take I-10, pal,” Gary answered. “That will get us all the way to Jacksonville, Florida. One thing about the southern tier of states is that they all have pretty liberal state gun laws. I expect we’re going to meet up with a whole bunch of modern-day Johnny REBS.”

“Johnny Yuma…” Ron began.

“Shut up Ron, we’ve heard the song already,” Gary said.

“I’m a Reb, Gar-Bear,” Ron said, “Texas born and bred.”

“Yeah and you left Texas when you were 10 days old,” Gary responded, “I’m not so sure that counts.”

“When we gets to Alabama,” Clarence said, “We can look up some of my kin.”

“We haven’t even filled the gas tank yet and you fellas have us going to family reunions and are bragging about your southern heritage,” Gary laughed. “This ought to be a fun road trip. I’m the only real Rebel here, anyway.”

“You aren’t from the south,” Ron pointed out.

“I think the hospital was on the south side of Alameda,” Gary said, “And Iowa is south of Minnesota. But, I don’t cotton to that Yankee President we have so maybe they’ll make me an honorary Confederate. And, who was it pointed out what Kerry was doing with that speech and got the ball rolling?”

“What are we going to take for weapons?” Clarence asked.

“Just the usual load out Clarence,” Gary said, “Our M1A’s, M16A4/M203’s, our Winchesters and Vaqueros, our 1911’s, shotguns, some 40mm grenades, LAW Rocket’s, hand grenades, C-4 and a few thousand rounds of ammo.”

“Are we taking a pickup or a semi?” Ron asked.

“Yes,” Gary answered. “Actually I figured a 24’ U-Haul would handle the weapons and

ammo and we can pull an Airstream with the pickup.”

“I can only see a couple of problems with that, Gary,” Clarence said. “In the first place, we don’t have a pickup. In the second place, we don’t have an Airstream. In the third place, we can’t afford to rent a U-Haul truck and put 15 or 20 thousand miles on it.”

“But Clarence,” Gary said, “This is America. We can buy a pickup with one month down and 60 months to pay. We can buy an Airstream with one month down and 240 months to pay. And, we can steal a U-Haul truck and change the license plates. Then we can stop making payments on the pickup and Airstream and by the time they run us to ground, our trip will be over. After that, we can file bankruptcy and start all over.”

“Where did you ever learn to think like that Gar-Bear?” Ron asked.

“When I worked at Target, Ron,” Gary explained. “Back in 1972, Target had a pretty liberal return policy. People would buy a pair of shoes, wear them out and then bring them back and exchange them. And the coffee pots; man, I’ll tell you, every time someone got married, we’d have a run on those coffee urns and the following week, we’d get them all back as defective. In those days, everything that was returned as defective had to be returned to the manufacturer. Eventually, Target got smart. They’d wash out the coffee pots, test them, and if they worked, put them on an end cap on clearance.”

“Aren’t you being a little hard on the American public?” Ron said.

“The hell you say Ronald McDonald,” Gary retorted, “Listen to the gangsta rap these days if you can stomach more than about 5 seconds of it. Every other word begins with “F” and they want us killing the police. And the sad thing about that is...well, the kids listen to that crap.”

“Look who got up on the cynical side of the bed this morning, Clarence,” Ron pointed at Gary.

“Ron when I write fiction, I use the handle, ‘Tired Old Man’,” Gary explained. “I’m not so old, but I sure am tired. I’m tired of music that has no music. I’m tired of all the teenybopper girls running around half dressed. I’m tired of the baggy pants and what passes for style among the younger generation. I’m tired of uneducated kids getting high school diplomas. Dubya didn’t want any child left behind, boys, but I believe we left a whole generation behind.”

“I see what you mean Ron,” Clarence said. “Gary, is there anything you do like?”

“I liked the 1950’s,” Gary said, “And then I graduated from high school and nothing was ever the same afterwards.”

“You just grew up, Gary,” Clarence said, “And your perspective changed.”

“I’m not so sure I ever grew up Clarence,” Gary retorted, “I think that I just got older.”

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 18 – Shocking Reality

“Gary, don’t let me burst your bubble,” Clarence said, “But we ain’t gonna haul a truck-load of munitions around the country and if, and let me repeat that, IF we buy a pickup and an Airstream, we’s gonna make all the payments likes we’s supposed to.”

“Clarence is right, Gary,” Ron nodded. “However, if we weren’t Reserve Deputies, but real Deputies, AND, we were on an assignment for the Sheriff’s Department, we could probably get by with taking a few weapons. Some states offer professional courtesy to LEO’s and some states don’t.”

“Doesn’t the Sheriff ever send Reserve Deputies on missions?” Gary asked, much chagrined by his friends’ reactions.

“I’ll check with Johnny and let you know Gar-Bear,” Ron replied.

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“I have your answer for you,” Ron said.

“I didn’t know that you talked to Johnny,” Gary replied.

“I couldn’t get a hold of him, so I looked on the LA County Sheriff’s website,” Ron explained. “I tried to just copy the material, so I could cut and paste it for you, but I got a message that it was copyrighted, so I just wrote it all down. Reserve Deputy Sheriffs are utilized to supplement the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s law enforcement manpower. Like Full-time Deputies, Reserve Deputies are professionally trained and duly sworn law enforcement personnel. In most cases, Reserves are assigned to the same duties as Full-time Deputies. Since Reserve Deputies have the same powers of arrest as Full-time Deputies they are required by law to meet the same hiring, background, medical and psychological standards as Full-time Deputies.

“I also found out that, Reserve Deputy Sheriffs enjoy the challenge and excitement offered by law enforcement, as well as the satisfaction of providing a worthwhile community service; Reserve Deputy Sheriffs first complete the extensive state mandated training and then work assignments on evenings and/or weekends as their regular jobs permit; Reserve Deputy Sheriffs are issued a badge, an identification card, uniforms, a Beretta 92FS duty weapon, handcuffs, baton, and most other necessary equipment; Reserve Deputy Sheriffs have full peace officer powers when on duty, and if issued a CCW permit, may choose to carry a concealed weapon when off duty; Reserve Deputy Sheriffs volunteer 20 hours per month of their time with the regular compensation being one dollar per year;

“Reserve Deputy Sheriffs may also qualify for shooting bonus pay of up to \$32.00 per month, and some paid special event assignments are occasionally available. Reserve Deputy Sheriffs serve at the will of the Sheriff, must obey all Departmental regulations,

but do not fall into the framework of the civil service system; and, Reserve Deputy Sheriffs supplement the regular operations of the Sheriff's Department by working in their choice of Uniform Reserve (Patrol), Mounted Posse, Search and Rescue or as a Specialist," Ron explained.

"But we didn't get all of that training," Gary said. "And, we don't work 20 hours a month like you said."

"The website is probably talking about regular Reserve Deputies," Ron observed. "I think that we are Specialist Reserve Deputies and are only Reserve Deputies in the first place because Johnny got us special dispensation from the Sheriff. I don't know what the real story is without talking to Johnny. But, you know how some people like to screw up a perfectly good story for you."

"Yeah I know Ron," Gary said, "Every once in a while I'd get my hackles up when someone was overly critical of my storylines. I always tried to accommodate legitimate criticism, but some people just went too far. I always managed to let them know one way or another that I perceived that they crossed over the line."

"So what are we going to take with us for weapons?" Clarence, who had taken in the exchange, asked.

"I'm not sure what to say, Clarence," Gary answered, "Maybe a slingshot, or the Beretta 92FS Duty Weapons that Johnny conveniently forgot to give us."

"I don't know why we're driving anyway," Ron said, "Maybe we could get pilots' licenses and form our own Survivalist oriented airline. Then we could build a bunch of super-doooper airplanes that fly at 2,000 miles per hour upside down in a blizzard and land straight up and straight down."

"Can't get a pilot's license if you have diabetes, Ron," Gary said, "So that let's Clarence and I out of that scenario." (fact)

"Well, lookie here," Clarence said.

"Look at what Clarence?" Gary asked.

"I was rubbing on the badge to shine it up for the trip and the word 'Reserve' came right off," Clarence said. "I reckon that we be having regular Deputy Sheriff's badges."

"Let me try that," Ron said, grabbing the Brasso and cleaning cloth. "Well, I'll be darned, Gar-Bear, he's right, the word 'Reserve' rubs right off."

"I guess that solves one problem fellas," Gary said, "Since we have real Deputy Sheriff's badges, we'd better stick with the slingshots."

They didn't, of course. What they did do was to buy an Airstream on the friendly 240 equal monthly payments plan and a Sierra Hotel Dodge diesel pickup with the big engine and everything else including a winch (they wanted a wench, but she was tied up in the dealers office wearing only handcuffs and a grin) on the friendly 72 equal monthly payments plan. Then, The Three Amigos got their mechanic friend, Chris, to make a bunch of modifications to that Airstream. When Chris was done, you couldn't even tell that he'd made a single change. But, buried inside that Airstream, somewhere, were their M1A rifles, their M16A4/M203 rifles, the MP-5 sub machine guns, the 1911's, some 40mm grenades, LAW Rocket's, hand grenades, C-4 and a few thousand rounds of ammo. The Ruger Vaqueros and the Winchester rifles were locked in a gun safe and just to make sure that no one gave them any trouble, they had trigger locks on the weapons and the ammunition was stored separately.

Gary figured, maybe rightly, maybe wrongly, that it wouldn't hurt to hang a pair of those dice from the inside rearview mirror, too. So, on Monday September 11, 2006, The Three Amigos set out, all by themselves, to see the country and raise a little hell if they thought that they could get away with it. Those overload springs on the pickup proved to be a wise choice too, because you couldn't even tell the trailer was grossly overweight. But before they left, they checked the laws in the states through which they planned to pass and weighed the truck, the trailer and so forth and unloaded enough of the ammo that they were within weight limits. It simply wouldn't do to get caught transporting a very illegal arsenal because they were overweight. They even checked all of the driver's license laws, just in case. The Three Amigos were just 3 LA County Sheriff's Deputies out burning up their accumulated vacation time prior to their retirements. And, they drove the speed limit, too, 55mph.

"Didn't you bring any real food, Ron?" Gary asked, "All I can find is a bunch of Tex-Mex stuff in the cupboards."

"There ain't no chicken?" Clarence asked.

"I figured we would do the Tex-Mex stuff for lunch fellas," Ron explained, "And eat out at night."

"Hey, that could get expensive," Gary protested. "We're on a budget here since y'all insisted on paying for the truck and the trailer."

"We'll stop at a grocery store and get you a head of lettuce," Ron laughed, "You can eat like a rabbit if you want, but I'm eating steak."

"And I'm eatin' chicken," Clarence added.

"Drop me off at the McDonalds," Gary replied.

Ron caught that y'all, of course. *Johnny Yuma was a rebel...* he started in. Sang the whole song and started over. The amigos had a list of sorts, courtesy of their friend

Johnny who had 'borrowed' it from FEMA before they blew town. It was several pages long and listed the names and addresses of suspected militia groups and a suspect contact person. Several pages were a bit of an understatement, I suppose, it looked more like a phone book.

"Where are we starting to contact people?" Ron asked.

"We can get the California people later, Ron," Gary said, let's start in Quartzsite, Arizona."

Quartzsite...

The list gave the name of a fella named Clyde, (sorry can't use last names) who was a long time resident of Quartzsite. They found Clyde without much difficulty, but then had to figure how to make the introduction. These militia types tended not to be forthcoming about their extracurricular activities, you know.

"Your name Clyde?" Gary asked.

"Who wants to know?" Clyde asked.

"My name is Gary Olsen and I'm from Palmdale," Gary said. "I'm sure that you've heard of me and my two amigos, right?"

"Can't say that I have," Clyde replied. "What can I do for you Olsen?"

"Nothing much, Clyde," Gary replied, "We are out seeing the country and the poor condition it's in."

"You said a mouthful there fella," Clyde agreed. "Course it's a lot worse out there in California."

"Say Clyde," Ron butted in, "You wouldn't know where the nearest reservation is, would you? We're a mite short on cigarettes."

"What's your name mister?" Clyde asked.

"Ron Green," Ron said, "And the tall guy is Clarence Rawlings."

"Olsen, Green and Rawlings, huh?" Clyde said. "It's illegal to buy smokes on the Res."

"It's just a danged tax law," Ron said, "You sure you never heard of us?"

"I'd didn't say I hadn't Green," Clyde replied, "I said that I couldn't say that I had. Maybe I've heard of you and maybe I haven't."

“Did you know that your name is on this FEMA list of militia contacts around the country?” Gary asked holding up the thick book. “Our names are too, if it’s of any interest to you.”

“You fellas part of some militia group, are you?” Clyde asked.

“Not exactly,” Clarence said, “But old Gary there is on the ruling council of the Moon Shadows housing tract.”

“Moon Shadows?” Clyde said. “Say wasn’t that the place all over the news because you killed a bunch of gang bangers?”

“That’s the place,” Clarence agreed.

“They was saying on the news that a lot of them gang bangers died from machine gun wounds,” Clyde noted.

“Yeah,” Ron said, “I heard that too Clyde. Of course they never came up with any machine guns, now did they?”

“Seems there was talk of some M16’s or grenade launchers or something, too,” Clyde fished.

“I heard that too, Clyde,” Clarence replied, “But they never found any of those either. Say, wasn’t it a shame about all those feds who were killed at that Library Raid?”

“Word around was that the guys that pulled that one off got their hands on 14 MP-5’s,” Clyde remarked.

“I heard that only 12 of the 14 were serviceable, Clyde,” Gary announced.

“Say where are you staying tonight?” Clyde asked.

“We’ll get someplace to park the Airstream here in town,” Gary answered.

“Well, you might want to try John down the road there,” Clyde said, “He’s one of those Patriots, you know.”

“That ought to work out just fine, Clyde,” Ron said, “We are too.”

“You don’t say,” Clyde chuckled, “I never would have guessed.”

I told you that they didn’t know quite how to approach Clyde, didn’t I? But they had about run out of hints by the time Clyde warmed up to them. What they needed was an introduction of some kind so they didn’t have to spend an hour trying to tell the guy they were Patriots, too. That evening after dinner, low and behold, who should show up but

Clyde?

“The Colorado River Indian Reservation is just northwest of town if you’re still looking for cigarettes,” Clyde said.

“Hi Clyde, thanks,” Ron said. “What are you up to?”

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 19 – Introductions

“Well, I bought a bottle of the good stuff,” Clyde said, “The bars in this town ain’t much and I thought you might like a little taste.”

“Clyde, we surely do appreciate the sentiment,” Ron explained, “But the three of us are all recovering alcoholics and we’ll have to pass on the offer.”

“I heard that about you fellas, too,” Clyde smiled. “But a fella has to be careful, you know.”

“You boys sure were a hemming and a hawing down there at the store today, new at this are you?” Clyde asked.

“New at contacting other people yes,” Gary admitted. “There has to be a better way for the militia groups to keep in contact.”

“We have a way Gary,” Clyde said setting the unopened bottle on the floor. “The popular one this season is ‘friends of Dubya’.”

“Then you’ve decided that we’re on the up and up?” Gary asked.

“Made a couple of calls, sent some emails,” Clyde said, “Anyway, you got by John and if John says you’re ok, that’s good enough for me.”

“Our John is named Ron and Patti,” Gary said. “You know, the subject of getting acquainted with some new residents came up a while back. My first instinct was to give the NRA members a pass, but I thought better of it and had Ron and a gal in the housing tract, Patti, check out the people anyway. Just because you’re a card carrying something doesn’t automatically make you a good anything.”

“Decided we aren’t some FEMA undercover guys, huh?” Ron observed.

“If you were, we wouldn’t be having this conversation,” Clyde smiled again. “You boys would be engaged in a new occupation.”

“Oh, what might that be?” Clarence asked.

“Pushing up daisies,” Clyde replied, deadpan.

It seemed as if there were some seriously minded militia groups to be found after all. And, it wasn’t as simple as being a ‘friend of Dubya’. There was more to the recognition than that and Clyde patiently explained to Ron, Clarence and Gary what else was involved. It turned out that Clyde was a ‘friend of Bill W.’ too, just like The Three Amigos. Bill sure did get around; he seemed to have a lot of friends. But that is an entirely different story. It was suggested to The Three Amigos that, should they happen to be in the

Buckeye area, Frank was a nice fella to visit with. But, before they left, Clyde shared a few plans he and some friends had made. There wasn't a whole lot going on in a town like Quartzsite, but it did have one advantage. It seemed to get a lot of snowbirds every year and there were a lot of flea markets that sold more than fleas and those polished pieces of quartz.

Buckeye...

"Clyde said you fellas might just show up," Frank said after The Three Amigos had introduced themselves and said all of the right things. "You know boys, we sort of adopted a tactic from those terrorists. If the A-rabs can use cells to keep the government from figuring who's on first, we can do the same thing. In my case, I know Clyde and one other fella with another group. That way, nobody can rat too many people out if the government boys get their hands on them."

"We never heard much about the FBI catching any of those people who did all that crap on 12/11/05," Ron said.

"Government didn't catch a lot of them from what I've heard," Frank agreed, "But that doesn't mean they didn't get their come uppance."

"Do tell," Clarence said.

"Well fellas, carload of them people came boiling out of Phoenix before we even had that announcement," Frank explained. "Anyway, they got into a fender bender and just plain went nuts. They were acting awfully funny, I can tell you that. I got the call, you know, and when my partner and I showed up to write up the accident report, we both noticed how anxious they seemed to be to get out of the area. We ran the plate and the car wasn't stolen or anything, but we hauled them in on a technicality. They had insurance but couldn't prove it and we had to call the company. Anyway, they were sitting there looking at the wall clock and their wrist watches and looked like they were about to melt down. But, to make a long story short, the insurance came back ok and we wrote it up and let them go. That was about an hour before the President came on the TV."

"So you had them and let them go?" Ron asked.

"Well, Ron, we didn't have anything to hold them on," Frank continued. "Then that announcement came and it all made sense. So naturally we went looking for them, wanting to know where they planted their bomb."

"And?" Gary asked.

"And we thought they headed west because of the prevailing winds and all," Frank explained. "Went all the way west to the country line at exit 69 looking for them. We also had a few cars down on 85 towards Gila Bend. We found them all right, about 5 minutes before those bombs went off. It was a crazy time about then, what with the dirty bombs

and the one suitcase bomb in near the Capitol. Well, a couple of the boys also happen to belong to the militia in addition to being Deputies. They sort of lost it, you see, what with family in Phoenix and all and they drug those A-Rabs out to the desert and gave them a proper cross-examination. Man did those A-Rabs spill their guts.”

“So did you find out a lot?” Clarence asked.

“Found out who their contact was and more than they ever wanted to know about the Quran,” Frank said.

“What happened to them?” Ron asked.

“The Deputies? Oh, nothing, they kept their mouths shut and it all blew over,” Frank explained.

“No the terrorists, Frank,” Ron said, “What happened to the terrorists?”

“Is it true that those A-Rab boys believe that if they die for the cause they go to Paradise?” Frank asked. “Cause I’d sure feel bad if I knew those boys got to go to Heaven. The A-Rabs? Well, those deputies are Apache, have you ever seen what an Apache can do with a sharp knife?”

“Cut them up some, huh?” Ron surmised.

“Hell no, Ron. Those Deputies had family in Phoenix,” Frank said. “They skinned those 4 A-Rabs alive. Then they buried them face down in the desert facing to the west.”

“Sounds like they got what was coming to them,” Clarence said nodding his head.

“Now the guy they gave up was hard to find,” Frank continued. “We went out of jurisdiction and got him in Kingman. Turned him over to those two Deputies. They lost family, you know. Don’t know what they did to him, but I’ll bet it wasn’t pretty. Heard tell that they took him down to the Res and gave him to the women.”

“Man, the death of 1,000 cuts,” Clarence said.

“Clarence, I can’t tell you that that’s truth, legend or myth,” Frank said, “But I expect he was a while dying.” (True, used in China until 1905. Lookup ‘slow slicing’.)

After entertaining The Three Amigos with his tale about the terrorists and their fate, Frank took them around to meet some of the militia people. The radiation, he told them, was all cleared out now, but it had taken its toll. The FEMA people and ATF had taken their toll, too, he pointed out. But then, some of those FEMA people went up against the wrong group and just disappeared. Hadn’t made the headlines, Frank said, probably because Kerry was afraid to announce the disappearance so soon after that Massacre out in Palmdale. Frank said he wouldn’t mind meeting the people who were responsible

for that ambush. He'd be mighty proud to shake their hands. The Three Amigos didn't tell him that he'd gotten his wish. Frank told them they ought to look up a fellow named Otto over in Apache Junction. And don't let the name fool you, because Otto was a full-blooded Mescalero Apache.

Apache Junction...

"Got an email from Frank," Otto said after the introductions were done, "He said to make you boys comfortable and fill you in on our operation."

"I don't mean to be rude," Gary asked, "But how does a full-blooded Apache end up with a name like Otto?"

"My daddy admired this fella from Sweden or Norway or someplace like that," Otto laughed. "Made a bet with the guy and if he lost, he had to name his first born son Otto."

"I won't ask who won the bet," Ron chuckled.

"Tell me a little about your group Otto," Gary requested.

"Glad to, but tell me about yourselves first," Otto came back.

"As you must know," Gary began, "We're from Palmdale, California. Aren't part of the local militia group, just some friends and homeowners looking out for themselves. We've had some good luck and some bad, but mostly good. Did one operation without thinking it through and got shot up some. Haven't lost anyone out of the group, yet. Very good assortment of weapons, especially considering we live in the great Kalifornia, birthplace of liberalism and home to 10% of the nations' population. Before 11/12, LA County was the most populated county in the country. The terrorists hit LA especially bad, lost a lot of people. We weathered it out in a small shelter intended for 6 people; all 24 of us. Killed some gangsters, did some feds and that's about it."

"That's close to the way I heard it," Otto grinned. "We're a small group here, all Mescalero Apaches. Weapons never were much of a problem in Arizona until after the strike. Then the feds did their thing and Arizona became like a lot of other places, so far as guns go. We don't much kill the feds so much as terrorize them. We're doing to the white man what they did to us last century. They raped and killed a lot of Apache women and children, you know. So, we keep these people in mortal fear for their families."

"That doesn't sound like it would accomplish much," Ron offered an opinion.

"You'd be surprised how effective it is, Ron was it?" Otto said. "They're so busy trying to keep their families safe that they are very ineffective."

"Why haven't they just moved their families out?" Clarence asked.

“They tried that,” Otto explained. “We blew up the vehicle they had those families inside and killed the lot of them. Payback is a bear, but we did to them what they did to us.”

“Back when he was still alive,” Gary mentioned, “My dad and step mom used to winter in Farnsworth Village East.”

“That’s just down the road, Gary,” Otto said, “But we don’t get so many snowbirds any more. Radiation got a whole lot of those folks, coming in November like it did. Terrorists put a dirty bomb in there by Dillard’s and the Village took the greatest hit. Radiation sickness killed most of them. The place is pretty much a ghost town now.”

“Maybe we’ll swing down that way,” Gary suggested. “See if anyone is living in dad’s old house. If not, maybe we can put up there for a couple of nights.”

“Odds are the place is empty,” Otto replied. “Give me the address and we’ll look you boys up before you leave town.”

Gary directed Ron to Farnsworth Village East and down past the golf course and to the street before the one his father had lived on. Gary had Ron turn right at that corner, go to west end of that street, turn left and then turn left again at the next corner. None of the houses looked alike and yet they all looked alike. Gary always did have trouble finding his dad’s house, but the new owners hadn’t changed the distinctive porch lights and Gary found the place like he always had, by the porch lights. It was a ghost town. When his dad had sold the house in 1990, he sold it furnished. The front door was unlocked and they went in. Gary was nearly bowled over with remembrances; almost nothing had changed.

Whoever this guy was that had bought his dad’s house had been a gun collector like his father. But, unlike his father, this guy was into shoulder arms. In checking the house out, they found that the guy had converted the little pantry off the kitchen into a gun storage room. Strangely, the guns were still there. This guy must have been closer to the minimum age of 55 and must have really been into competitive shooting. They found several rifles, all bolt-action. One was a .308, a second a .338 Lapua and a third .50BMG. The latter two calibers were flat shooting, long-range sniper calibers. Then Gary noticed the framed awards and military stuff. This guy had been a sniper in the service. That explained the rifles, especially the .338. It was primarily a sniping cartridge and was only outperformed by the .50BMG. These rifles and the large quantity of match ammo ended up in the Airstream. Nice, and they were legal, too because they were bolt-action rifles.

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 20 – All My Ex's Live in Texas

*All my ex's live in Texas
And Texas is the place I'd dearly love to be
But all my ex's live in Texas
And that's why I hang my hat in Tennessee*

They had spent a few days in Mesa and then had made stops in Tucson, Lordsburg, Las Cruces, and were in the El Paso area. It was late in September and Texas was warm. They had been through some roadblocks, had the Airstream searched more than once and had run into about what they expected. Some of the local LEO's were into professional courtesy and some weren't, but they were doing ok, so far. Tucson was a mess; the suitcase nuke took out a lot of downtown. They'd ventured over to the studio and so Gary could show Ron the sets for those movies of John Wayne's. The place had burned down a second time.

A lot of the cities had only a few feds assigned, or none at all. But, with the passage of time, they were finding fewer and fewer of the feds. And, the Army and other military units had been able to resist getting into the fray. That Chairman of the Joint Chief's must have some big ones. For that matter, all of them must have had big ones; Kerry had fired about 3 or 4 of them by this time. The replacements turned out not to be any different than their predecessors and they refused to let the military get involved in what the military deemed to be a civilian matter. So far, the military was standing by its oath to protect and defend the Constitution and Kerry was the President, not the Constitution, although he was doing his level best to gut that document and the laws of the country.

There were several groups in El Paso, and having met most of the coordinator's, the boys moved on to San Antonio. When they hit San Antonio and met the people and saw the Alamo, they changed their plans. San Antonio was on I-35 and Derek lived on I-35. At least he had before TSHTF. Gary had only heard from his son sporadically since 11/12 and he wanted to see him and the grandchildren. This naturally got Ron to thinking about his kids in Ft. Smith and they ended up making a detour. Brenda and Jennifer were finally located and Ron insisted that they pack up their belongings and head for Palmdale. The Three Amigos ended up spending 3 weeks in Ft. Smith while Ron got that all coordinated. By this time, it was getting well into October.

"We can take 71 on up to Kansas City and pick up I-35 there," Ron explained when they got ready to leave Ft. Smith.

"Can't say as I know this part of the country," Gary replied. "Only time I was in Arkansas was Christmas of '64 when I drove my car back to Iowa from Edwards. Went through Texarkana into a town named Magnolia and from there up to Little Rock. Seems like I picked up 65 in Pine Bluff and took it through Little Rock all the way to Des Moines, but I can't really remember. All I can remember was several hundred miles of bad road. Drove non-stop from Magnolia to Charles City. Man was that the trip."

“My people was waiting for us in Arkansas,” Clarence reminded them.

“This is just a detour Clarence,” Gary explained. “You can understand Ron and I wanting to touch bases with our kids can’t you?”

“Of course, I can Gary,” Clarence smiled, “But I’d like to see my kin. What are you two planning after we find your kids?”

“Clarence,” Ron spoke, “We can get a line on Gary’s two boys in Iowa and my daughter in Austin and then head east and south. There are several interstate highways to choose from and we can get to either Mississippi or Alabama from Illinois. Probably make Alabama around Christmas time.”

“So far we’ve been lucky fellas,” Clarence said, “But it seems to me that the temperament of the country is changing. I know it’s probably pretty risky, BUT I think we should move some weapons into the pickup.”

“Good way for us to end up in jail, partner,” Ron responded.

“We have our badges, maybe that will help,” Clarence insisted.

Whatever was bothering Clarence was really bothering him. So, against their better judgment, Ron parked the pickup and they got out the MP-5’s and stashed them in the pickup. They were in a bit of a hurry to get to Iowa and drove straight through from Ft. Smith. Just south of a town named Harrisonville, Missouri, they ran into trouble. A bullet pinged off the hood of the pickup causing Ron to floor the gas pedal. The pickup had a powerful motor but it couldn’t accelerate that fast pulling the near the weight limit trailer. They made it about ¼ mile before a shot took out the right front tire. The vehicle was a bear to keep under control, but Ron managed to bring it to a stop about another ¼ mile up the road. By this time, the pickup was taking fire from several directions. The fire wasn’t concentrated, but it was enough to cause The Three Amigos grave concern. Clarence passed out the MP-5’s and the men slid out of the truck and took cover as best as they could manage.

“There’s one of them on the west side of the road in that clump of trees,” Ron announced.

“Looks like a couple of them behind us, too,” Gary added.

“I got me one over here,” Clarence shouted. “We can’t stay here guys, it’s just a matter of time before they get all three of us.”

“I wish we had brought one of those sniper rifles,” Gary announced regretfully.

“You’ll get killed trying to get into the trailer Gar,” Ron hollered from his ditch on the west side of the road. “Let’s do like Stormin’ Norman and do a Hail Mary.”

The reference was obviously a reference to the tactic employed by the US in the Gulf War. The US forces had flanked the Iraqis and come in from the side, destroying vast numbers of the enemy. Gary started down the right ditch towards their rear; Clarence belly crawled to the left, as did Ron. It wasn't easy for the three old men, but in time, they got to positions where they could put the MP-5's to good use. In the span of a few short minutes, The Three Amigos opened up with the submachine guns and put down the attackers. Then, having learned a lesson from the Library, they waited. After a sufficient time had passed, they approached the attackers. They were apparently gang members out of KC, but that was only a guess. Their firearms were junk, not even worth picking up, so The Three Amigos left the bodies and the guns lay right where they were. When they got back to the truck, Gary got the 3 sniper rifles out of the trailer and put them in the pickup while Ron and Clarence changed the right front tire.

"How did you know that was going to happen, Clarence?" Gary asked.

"I didn't, Gary," Clarence admitted, "But the hairs on the back of my neck were getting prickly and I just went with my gut."

"I'm going to bypass KC altogether," Ron announced. "We can take 291 here and go right into Liberty."

"From Liberty, I think we can make Huxley in 4-5 hours," Gary suggested.

"Grab some boxes of those 9mm rounds and reload the mags, Clarence," Ron directed.

The Three Amigos made it to Huxley in 4½ hours. When they pulled up in front of Derek and Mary's home, it was well into the evening and Derek was home from work in Des Moines.

"Hey kid, how are you doing?" Gary said embracing Derek.

"Where did you come from?" Derek asked.

"We've been out seeing the country and making contact with militia groups since the week after Labor Day," Gary explained. "When we hit 35 in San Antonio, I decided that we ought to get to Iowa and find you and your brother."

"What's with the bullet holes?" Derek asked, "Did you have trouble?"

"Got jumped south of KC. What was the name of that place, Ron?"

"Harrisonville," Ron replied.

"Did you skirt KC or go into town?" Derek asked. "Reason I ask is that KC has had some trouble. Some holdout gangsters from Chicago made it down there and have

been raising hell.”

“There’re 4 less of them now than there were before,” Clarence said, “Hi. I’ve heard a lot about you, Derek. My name is Clarence Rawlings and your Dad and I go back a ways.”

“You’re the 3rd amigo,” Derek said. “I feel like I know you from my Dad’s stories.”

“Don’t believe everything he writes about me,” Clarence laughed. “I’m taller, better looking and smarter than your Dad makes me out in his stories.”

“Come in, come in,” Derek said.

“Clarence, would you and Ron get the match ammo for those 3 rifles we picked up in Mesa from the trailer?” Gary asked. “I’m going to give those rifles to Derek, he’s a regular Davy Crockett when it comes to rifles.”

“Come on Ron, give me a hand,” Clarence said.

Gary got the 3 rifles and 3 SMG’s from the pickup and went into the house.

“Where did you get the MP-5’s?” Derek asked.

“Some feds at the Library in Palmdale didn’t need them anymore,” Gary replied.

“That was you?” Derek asked.

“Yeah, it was the 3 of us and 3 of David’s boys,” Gary said. “Got our butts shot to hell, too.”

“Tell me about it,” Derek said pouring his Dad a cup of coffee.

“Nothing to tell, Derek,” Gary said, “Half-baked plan, fairly well executed, but we got careless and one guy shot 4 of us. Nothing life threatening, but it taught us a lesson.”

“Man, those are some nice shooting irons, Derek said referring to the rifles, “Where did you come up with those?”

“We spent a couple of nights in Dad’s old house in Mesa,” Gary explained. “The guy who bought it from dad was a former military sniper and must have been into the shooting sports. Anyway, I thought that you might like to have them.”

“Man, would I ever,” Derek grinned.

“So how’s the job going and what do you hear from Damon?” Gary asked.

“Job stinks, and Damon is in Mason City, laid off,” Derek replied.

“Ever think about moving to California?” Gary asked.

“All the time, Dad,” Derek answered. “Why?”

“I was thinking that it might be nice to have you boys living in Palmdale,” Gary said. “You can put the house on the market and move when it sells.”

“It won’t sell in 10-years,” Derek said.

“Well then, how about I give you some money and you just pack up and leave?” Gary suggested.

“I can’t just walk away from this house,” Derek said.

“Why not?” Gary asked, “I didn’t think you had much equity.”

“Don’t have any,” Derek admitted. “Prices are down and we’re in a negative equity situation.”

“Then, walk away,” Gary suggested. “Get a fresh start in Palmdale.”

“That wouldn’t be right,” Derek replied.

“I agree, but it’s your best option, son,” Gary said. “I’ll buy you a used trailer and you can pull it to Palmdale with Mary’s truck.”

“What about DJ?” Derek asked.

“Pick him up on the way and don’t let Junior give you any crap,” Gary said, “You’re DJ’s father and Junior isn’t getting any younger.”

Derek and Mary talked about it late into the night. The next morning, they were agreed to take Gary’s suggestions and Gary and Derek found and bought a used trailer. They loaded everything Derek and Mary had worth taking on the trailer and Gary gave Derek ample cash to get them to California. He also loaned Derek his M16A4 and gave Derek some ALICE gear, magazines and an assortment of grenades. He loaned Mary the MP-5 and gave her 1/3 of their magazines and extra boxes of ammo. Then, The Three Amigos set out for Mason City to find Damon. Damon wasn’t hard to find, he was shackled up with the latest girlfriend. It didn’t take much discussion to get Damon to agree to dump the broad and move to Palmdale. Clarence loaned Damon his MP-5 and Gary gave Damon a wad of cash. Damon said he was going to find a pickup somewhere, get the kid’s from Garner and head out. He figured he could buy Carrie off cheap.

Charles City was just 31 miles east of Mason City and southeast of Austin. The boys drove over to Charles City and Gary went into the bank alone to have a talk with Matt,

the banker. Helping the boys had tapped Gary out. He came out of the bank with a smile on his face and his right front pocket bulging; so Matt must have been able to help him out. Next stop, Austin, Minnesota. Austin is north on 218 maybe 60 miles northwest of Charles City. That's where Paula and Mark were.

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 21 – Austin to Birmingham

When they arrived in Austin, Paula and Mark were very happy to see Ron. And, they took almost no convincing to get them to load up a trailer and head for California. They were both California natives anyway and didn't take to the Midwest. Ron was a little light on cash and they weren't well off, so Gary loaned Ron enough money to get them to California. Ron sent his M16A4 and MP-5 with the kids. From Austin, the 3 Amigos headed east, picked up a series of interstates and eventually ended up on I-65 headed into Birmingham. They spent a few days in the Birmingham area so Clarence could visit with his family. They had arrived just before Thanksgiving, earlier than anticipated.

Ron and Gary were without portfolio in the Birmingham area but they still had the phonebook sized list of militia groups and contacts. They managed to locate one group of good old boys. Their trip from Austin to Birmingham, though long, had been uneventful. Those good old boys told them that they ought to think about returning to Palmdale rather than continuing to the east. Things, they said, were heating up and like it or not, there would soon be open fighting in the streets. It seemed that unable to control the country the way he had intended, President Kerry had invited UN Peacekeepers in and the US military opposed the move. The Three Amigos were surprised, but no one more than Gary. He had said that it would never come to a fight in the streets and that they would win their fight at the ballot box. Gar-Bear was wrong again, but what was new about that?

Having returned all US troops from overseas, Bush, and then Kerry, had created a surplus of soldiers in the US. Kerry solved that problem by ordering the US military cut back to 8 divisions. Then, the strike by the terrorists had come and between the active duty military and the reserves and National Guard, there had been insufficient forces to handle the disaster. This had led Kerry to ration food, impress civilians into cleanup efforts and had prevented the military from being effective in dealing with the gang problem. It wasn't that there weren't enough tanks and jets, but there weren't people to operate the equipment. Minor victories scored by Kerry, like the protection of Palm Springs and the demise of the 8,000 gangsters on I-15 were just that, minor victories. But, one would have never known that to be the case, given the play the Executive Branch gave the events.

And then, the revolution, as soft spoken and quiet as it had been, had begun. Kerry found himself losing ATF and FEMA staff almost as fast as he could replace them. And, given that situation, Kerry had begun to withdraw the federal civil servants into camps, arm and train them and hire more. However, the growing activities of the militia groups finally led Kerry to request help from the UN. The UN, France, Germany and Russia, especially, had exacted a high price for their help. It was a price that Kerry was willing to pay but that America was not. The military began to disobey the President.

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“How fast can you get this rig back to Palmdale, partner?” Gary asked.

"I don't know; how far is it from Birmingham to LA?" Ron asked.

"That be about 2,050 miles, give or take," Clarence answered.

"Figure about 41 hours pulling this trailer non-stop," Ron projected. "We'll have to get fuel several times and go over the Continental Divide."

"So, maybe midnight tomorrow?" Gary asked.

"Give or take," Ron replied, "We gain some time zones."

"How many?" Gary asked.

"Two, Gary," Clarence answered.

"Put the pedal to the medal fellas and don't look back," Gary suggested strongly.

It is difficult in normal times to get radio stations in parts of the western US. The Three Amigos headed out on US 78 to join up with I-40 in Memphis. They could have taken I-59/I-20 to US 82 and that to Texarkana and joined I-40, but for whatever reason, they didn't. It was probably 6 of one and a half dozen of the other. They took the opportunity to refuel every time they found an open station and were soon enough on familiar ground, I-40. They optimized their stops, Ron suspending taking water pills, and combined fuel and pit and food stops, saving a lot of time. They were in Palmdale almost before they knew it. They were exhausted, but they were now on their home turf. Paula and Mark had only beaten them by a day. But, the families were all assembled and their only problem was finding places for everyone to sleep. The Three Amigos went to one of those storage facilities where people put up their campers for the winter and borrowed a few. It was less than perfect, but all of the families had a bed.

Randy had seen to keeping everything topped off in the housing tract and had even popped for some extra fuel tanks and fuel. Johnny had kept dropping off the occasional pickup load of ammo or, in some cases, munitions. The Three Amigos got their loaned out guns back and equipped the families from their growing armory. They had made it just in time, with barely hours to spare. Those Airbus filled with French, German and Russian soldiers began to arrive in the US the following day, 02Dec06. The fighting was about to begin. And Kerry had it all wrong, those soldiers who he'd booted out of the military sort of liked defending the Constitution and if the Army wouldn't let them do it; the militias they joined surely would.

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Planes and boats and trains brought the soldiers. They were coming to America. Canada, probably because of Great Britain, aligned with the US locals, but México aligned with the UN. Somehow I can just visualize Geraldo on TV screaming, "The Russians

Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming.” and drawing a map on the blackboard showing where all the US military units and militia groups were located. That was one case where prior restraint would have been appropriate, but it was a live TV feed. Should have shot the SOB (600 yards).

John Kerry admired Canada, probably because of their Socialized medicine that they funded with a combined 15% GST & PST. But, he was in charge here and he hadn't invited the Canadians to help out the US Army and Navy and Air Force. He told the Canadian Prime Minister to stay on his own side of the border or there would be trouble the Canadians couldn't handle, a clear nuclear threat. The American military units held back waiting to see how it played out. And, they had dispersed to remote areas of the country like out in the western deserts, the Appalachians and the Rockies. They were going to give those UN Peacekeepers the first move. And when they screwed the pooch, they were going to give them something else.

The difference in cultures came into play almost immediately. Americans were used to freedom, even under Kerry's heavy-handed tactics, and when those foreigners began to push, they pushed back. The French who had shown such great religious tolerance by banning head scarves for Muslim women in their school system took offense to some Amish folks in Pennsylvania. Amish aren't really fighters; it is a matter of their religious beliefs. Nevertheless, those same neighbors who were known to occasionally give the Amish a hard time came to their defense. Determined militiamen and a few Companies of Army troops who joined them took out the French Foreign Legion troops, their so-called Special Forces. The Russians brought forth their Spetsnaz to counter the American assault and the Americans countered with a small armored force. US-2, UN-0.

The UN fielded troops around the US and the Russian, French and German fighters kept the American Air Force, reduced as it was, at bay. At the moment, the UN enjoyed Air Superiority. The American military held back, waiting to see how the UN forces were deployed. The US military was now ready to strike. The militia units weren't waiting for no flippin' final setup to strike, they wanted the UN out and out now. Many battles were fought during December of 2006, mostly between the patriot militias and the UN. However, once the UN was in place, the US military attacked. Patton had said, “A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan in ten minutes.” The US military had waited to execute the perfect plan. US-2, UN-1.

Mt. Weather...

“This is working out better than I thought it might,” Kerry said. “The Army waited too long and I think the UN has the advantage.”

“Mr. President, I realize that there were some questions about your military service during Vietnam, but how can you pit the UN against the American Army?” Chuckie baby asked.

“Mr. Secretary,” Kerry glared, “I'll remind you to keep your liberal place. As soon as the

UN disarms the American public for us, we'll send them packing.”

“Mr. President, John, are you sure about this?” Schumer asked. “You opened the door to the UN and they may never leave.”

“That’s enough,” Kerry said. “Hillary wants your job so bad she can taste it, so you stop sounding like a Republican or you can be a Republican and she can have your job.”

“Sorry Mr. President,” Schumer said. (Hillary wanted Kerry’s job.)

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“We’re going to have to give some consideration to getting out of this housing tract Gary,” Ron suggested.

“Why would we want to leave the tract Ron?” Gary was quick to respond. “We have everything we need here.”

“Everything except real security, Gary,” Clarence jumped in. “You don’t want to leave because of your shelter. But, when a big UN force comes into town, those shelters of yours and Randy’s aren’t really going to provide much protection for the folks in the housing tract.”

“Randy, what do you think?” Gary asked.

“They have a point, Gary,” Randy said. “On the other hand, we’re secure here so I vote to stay.”

“Derek, do you have anything to add?” Gary asked.

“I agree with Randy, Dad,” Derek said.

Gary picked up the phone and punched in a number. “Johnny Jones, please,” he asked.

“Sergeant Jones,” Johnny answered.

“Johnny, Moon Shadows is battening down the hatches,” Gary said.

“What do you need?” Johnny asked.

“Can you put your hands on any extra food, Johnny?” Gary asked.

“We’ll grab a couple of grocery delivery trucks and send them over,” Johnny answered. “What’s your munitions situation like?”

“Fair to good, why?” Gary asked.

"I'm going to distribute everything we have to the militia and I thought you might want some too," Johnny replied.

"We'll send the pickup over," Gary said, nodding to Clarence. Clarence grabbed David's boys and headed for the pickup. He mouthed 'Sheriff's Department' and shrugged and Gary nodded.

"So what's going down, Gar-Bear?" Ron asked when Gary hung up.

"Johnny's sending food and Clarence went to pick up ammo," Gary explained. "I don't know how defensible this place is, but it's what we have."

"Push comes to shove partner," Ron said, "We can head for the mines up near Mojave. There are 4 of them there."

"We should be all right on water," Gary suggested, "The Palmdale Water District's distribution system includes over 345 miles of pipeline ranging in size from 4 inches to 42 inches in diameter. PWD also operates 27 water wells, 10 booster pumping stations, and 19 reservoirs (storage tanks) with an overall storage capacity of 34.6 million gallons of water. The District also maintains two interconnections between our system and that of the Antelope Valley East-Kern Water Agency and Littlerock Creek Irrigation District, which can be used in an emergency to transfer water from one system to another."

"Electricity could be a problem," Ron noted.

"We're just going to have to play that by ear," Gary said, "Natural gas, too. I wish we had a bigger generator or some alternative energy sources."

"We'll have to make do with what we have, Gar-Bear," Ron smiled. "We'll be ok. But, I saw a standby generator sitting down at the Palmdale Hospital. Is that place still tied up in litigation over the bankruptcy?"

"I guess. I don't really know," Gary said.

"I'm going to get Chris and Dick and we're going to get that generator," Ron said. "See ya later, partner."

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 22 – The Fuel Problem

Ron, Chris and Dick brought the generator back from Palmdale Hospital. It was another anomaly, just like the hospital itself. The hospital had been built too near the San Andreas Fault and had always been a problem. It closed around 1994 and was still just sitting there, empty. It makes a lot of sense to put a natural gas fueled generator in at a hospital that might lose its lights and gas in an earthquake, doesn't it? Dick said he could convert the thing to run on propane if he could get the right parts and Chris could install them. They took off the first thing the next morning, headed for a generator company in Lancaster. Lord love a duck, they got the parts. Now all they needed was a big tank of propane.

"I'll find a tank somewhere," Ron assured everyone. "The question is, where we are going to put it and the generator?"

"The power comes in underground from the west on Avenue R," Gary said, "Why don't we double fence the lot between us and Grecian Isles and put the tank and generator there? I can't remember for sure, but I think that I did that in one of my stories."

"Start putting in post holes about 6' in and 12' foot in," Randy said. "I'll get my buddy to dig a ditch and fill the fences. I'll also get some more posts and fencing."

"Try to get some barbed wire, too," Ron suggested, "We'll need more concertina."

"You can knock down a section of my back wall once you get the other wall in," Dick offered.

AmeriGas had an idle rental tank that Ron could have, either as a rental or as an outright purchase. The tank was manufactured by Trinity in 1971 and held 30,000-gallons. It was 47' long, 11' in diameter and rated for 250 psi. The tank was empty and could be loaded on a flatbed with a crane and hauled to Moon Shadows the same day. Ron rented the tank, purchasing it was out of the question. The cost to fill the tank was about \$50,000. Ron had paid Gary back and had nowhere near the money it took to fill the tank. Neither did Gary. Deep Pockets came to the rescue, but he said that he expected to be reimbursed for the fuel, he wasn't made of money, he claimed. It was hurry, hurry, to get a slab in for the generator. AmeriGas delivered the tank and began the filling process. They could only spare a single truck for the process. Murphy was there, too. Randy's excavating contractor friend was tied up and the ditch had to be dug by hand. The fence went in quickly and The Three Amigos 'supervised' the digging.

"You know Ron, I seem to have it in mind that US Borax used an underground mine before they started that big pit," Gary said. "Since we're not doing anything spectacular, maybe the 3 of us should take a trip up to Boron and see if my memory is correct. I have it in mind that I saw a film when I was in the Air Force about them storing records underground in the mine."

“If we’re trusting on your memory, we’re probably just wasting gas, but it beats telling people how to shovel dirt,” Ron said.

“They cleared out Edwards AFB and moved most of the stuff to Area 51,” Clarence said, “We can cut across the base and save a lot of miles.”

“How do you know that Clarence?” Gary asked, “Have eyes in the sky?”

“No. Johnny told me,” Clarence smiled.

“Good, we can finally get on base and I can show you fellas which barracks I lived in,” Gary said.

“Who cares which building you lived in in the 1960’s?” Ron said.

“Oh, all right, we’ll skip the tour, this time,” Gary agreed.

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Boron, CA...

“I believe you could put half the town of Palmdale in this mine,” Ron said.

“We’ll keep it as our Plan B, Ron,” Gary said, “Just in case we have to bug out.”

“We ought to go to that place where we borrowed those campers and set up a bunch of campers in this mine,” Clarence suggested. “Then if we had to bug out, we wouldn’t have to worry about housing.”

“I suppose we could put those 2 semi loads of food here too,” Gary pointed out. “I was reading somewhere that US Borax produces its own electricity here so we wouldn’t have to worry about power.”

Gee, I don’t remember these guys ever having an actual Plan B before, do you? The semis of food were diverted and about 50 camping trailers were borrowed from the storage lot. That lot was now as bare as a newborn baby’s butt. Because the ammo was still on the pickup, it went to Boron, too. Gary really was getting prepared for a change, no more 24 people in a shelter designed for 6.

◦

The Nighthawks had been refurbished at Area 51, and the B-2’s transferred there. The USAF began a campaign, using the stealth aircraft, to start bringing the UN down to size. They limited themselves to night missions and the 20 B-2’s and 54 F-117’s carrying bomb loads of GBU’s and CBU’s began to punch holes in the UN forces. Air superiority didn’t mean squat if you couldn’t get the birds on radar or see them. American ar-

mor was quietly moved into position to hit the UN forces when the USAF had them trimmed down to size. The bad thing about tanks was that they weren't really bulletproof on the top, a fact soon brought to the attention of the UN forces.

When the F-22 Raptor program was conceived, it was planned to have 381 aircraft by 2013. As of the 11/12/05 attack, the USAF had most of the F-22s in inventory but wouldn't have the full, smaller, fleet until 2007. While superior in nearly every way to the UN aircraft, the US was mighty short of the real Stealth fighters. They were used sparingly to avoid loss and the UN was losing air superiority only slowly to the fighters. However, the USAF wasn't above bombing aircraft sitting on the ground and the bomber fleet was doing a reasonable job trimming down the UN Air Force. Unfortunately, the French and Germans were able to manufacture replacement aircraft almost as quickly as they were destroyed. Almost.

Where was Curtis LeMay when you needed him? Finally, the USAF decided to mount a couple of missions to Europe. It wasn't doing one bit of good destroying the UN aircraft at the rate they were being replaced. Ten B-2's were sent to Germany and ten to France. The single strike by those 20 bombers did more to slow down the German and French fighters than any other thing. Russia hadn't built a new plane in a while and Russia had a lot of nuclear weapons.

The current problem with the French had seemed to originate after WW II, but in truth, France had probably wanted what later became the US to be a French instead of a British colony. They could stick one to their archenemies, the British, and buy themselves a colony. Didn't work out that way 230 years ago and they'd been difficult for a long time. The Free French, under DeGaulle had been a difficult ally to work with during the big one and after, DeGaulle had been not so pro American. There were many differences between the Americans and French, some cultural and some philosophical. And in the latter part of the 20th Century and the early 21st Century they'd only gotten worse. The American and British were two peoples separated by a common language and you could add the Aussies to the mix. On the upside, it was easy to find the French UN detachments, you could smell them.

Having conquered Los Angeles when a few thousand residents gave up, the UN forces began to spread out throughout southern California to capture the illegal American weapons. They loved the US Interstate System, Freeways in California, and one of those Freeways, SR-14, led to the Antelope Valley. After the token resistance and eventual surrender in LA, the UN forces got quite a shock when they rolled over the hill into the AV. They took heavy casualties from the combined Lancaster and Palmdale Militias. It's probably a good 10 miles from the site of that ambush to Moon Shadows, as a point of reference. At the sound of the far-off gunfire, someone triggered the battle klaxon and Moon Shadows went onto alert. The effort was for naught; the UN got its butt kicked, that day.

If anyone knew the name of that pass into the AV, where the Sierra highway and 14 cut through, they didn't live in Moon Shadows. There are a lot of ways into the AV, but

many weren't so obvious, and, that pass was a great chokepoint. There was Bouquet Canyon and others to the west, plus 138 coming in from the east, just to name a few. The Antelope Valley was bordered by mountains on 3 sides; to the north was the Tehachapi Range; to the west the parts of the Coastal Ranges; and, to the south the San Gabriel Range. And, almost all of the roads into the AV came through the mountains and had hundreds of natural ambush sites. After several aborted attempts to take the AV, the UN gave up and created essentially an isle of resistance surrounded by the UN.

This gave the residents of the AV the home field advantage. They knew all of the routes through the mountains and were easily able to avoid UN checkpoints and patrols. Around the US, the UN wasn't faring any better and perhaps not nearly as well. The militias snipped at their heels and the Army, Navy and Air Force confronted them face on. In New York City, a small militia group who didn't know that ANFO wasn't the hottest ticket in town, loaded up a couple of rental trucks and parked them at the UN Building, er, former UN building. And, to think, the UN had just finished refurbishing the building after the 11/12/05 attacks.

04Jan07...

"I'm really glad that you guys got that generator from Palmdale Hospital," Gary said. "But I'm worried we may run low on propane."

"Maybe in a few months when it's warm out," Ron said, "But we're keeping the tank topped off for now."

"We need to make a run to Boron and pick up one of those semi loads of food from the mine, too," Gary commented. "I think that the UN is just trying to starve us out."

"Go take a chill pill Gar-Bear," Ron suggested, "We're fine on food and fuel and everything else."

"Yeah, Gary," Clarence said, "Be laid back like me."

"If I were as laid back as you Clarence," Gary shook his head, "I'd be unconscious. Are you still worried that if we had a Revolution nobody would come?"

"I be right proud of the way Americans is taking on the UN," Clarence said. "Course if you believed that news on TV, the score would be UN-1,000, US-0."

"Geraldo seems to be happy now that he has his own prime-time one-hour news program," Ron observed dryly. "He's the best asset the UN has."

"He sure seemed happy that Chuckie baby resigned as Secretary of Homeland Security and Hillary was appointed to take Chuckie's place," Clarence opined.

"That just put's her one step closer to the throne," Gary said. "I thought it was nice of the

Republicans to win all of those Congressional seats in November, but since the UN won't let the new Senators and Representatives take their seats, the election was a wasted effort."

"Gary, an election is never a wasted effort," Clarence said sharply. "Even if we was on the road and didn't get to vote this time."

Mt. Weather...

"Some of the things that the UN wants are ridiculous," Kerry said.

"It's your own danged fault John," Hillary said. "If I'd have been President, I would never have agreed with some of the crap you agreed to."

"Let's show some respect for the office Hillary," Kerry protested. "It's Mr. President to you; I'm not your husband and you're not the First Lady."

"BS John, you're a one term President and you know it," Hillary responded. "You could have been a 2-term President, but no, you wanted to be King."

"It's not my fault those terrorists blew up half the country," Kerry protested.

"No, but you went overboard on cutting the military and using FEMA," Hillary said. "Now you've got the entire country po'd at you. And, you really can't blame the French and Germans for being po'd because the Air Force blew up those aircraft factories."

"Your language is awful for a Lady, Hillary," Kerry remarked.

"Who ever said I was a Lady?" Hillary asked.

"Well Madam Wannabe President," Kerry responded, "At least you could pretend."

"Why?" Hillary asked. "You screwed things up so I won't get to be President until 2016 and I may be too old by then."

[A controversial chapter - discusses the mixed feelings a parent has about any war and the possibility that he may lose a son or daughter. - TOM]

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 23 – Taking the Fight to Them

“I’m getting tired of sitting here waiting for the other shoe to drop,” Gary announced. “We need to take the battle to the UN if we’re going to have any fun.”

“Sounds like what I said before we went to the Library,” Clarence remarked.

“Six foot tall and bulletproof,” Ron snickered, “You can be in front, Clarence.”

“I wasn’t suggesting that we do the fighting,” Gary objected, “But there are a lot of younger men in the tract who could get out there and raise a little hell. We could blow up the Littlerock Dam, but that would be cutting off our noses to spite our face.”

“Those UN Forces are better equipped than we are Gary,” Clarence pointed out.

“That’s ok, Clarence,” Gary chuckled, “We’ll use our Corbamite device.

“Our WHAT?” Clarence asked.

“Our Corbamite device, a bluff, pal,” Gary explained. “The UN doesn’t know that they have us out gunned. We do have 40mm grenades, AT-4’s and LAWs Rockets. And, we have that .50 caliber rifle we picked up in Mesa.”

“Ron, what’s a Corbamite device?” Clarence asked.

“Since the beginning of Star Fleet...” Ron began to say. “The episode was named ‘The Corbomite Maneuver’. It was the 9th episode aired during the first year of the show,”

“Oh, I thought you were talking about something real,” Clarence said.

“There is nothing unreal about a bluff, Clarence,” Gary said. “If we can bluff the UN into thinking that we’re more powerful and better equipped than we are, it might force them into wasting resources protecting against a phantom menace.”

“I seen that movie,” Clarence said, “It was awful.”

“I wasn’t referring to the Star Wars movie, Clarence,” Gary said. “I was referring to their thinking that they were up against a powerful enemy that required extra security.”

“How will that help us?” Clarence asked.

“It won’t help ‘US’ pal,” Gary said, “But it will help other militia units. We don’t have to be in the front lines all of the time. Anything we do to screw with the UN helps with their removal and the success of the Revolution.”

“How IS the Revolution going?” Clarence asked.

“When John Kerry invited in the UN, we won,” Ron said. “The UN still has to be booted, but the US can handle that. For every atrocity, the UN will get it back 10-fold. Remember those folks over in Buckeye? Remember what those two Apache Deputy Sheriff’s did to those terrorists? Partner, you ain’t seen anything yet.”

Americans always had the capacity for cruelty, but usually the decency not to employ it. This was a horse of a different color. The militia groups around the country weren’t above a little cruelty if it helped to get rid of the UN. Gary took the 3 rifles they’d picked up in Mesa to Sandy.

“What can I do for you this time, Gary?” Sandy asked.

“These rifles are a little on the noisy side, Sandy, can you help me out?” Gary asked.

“The .308 and the .50 BMG won’t be a problem,” Sandy replied, “But I’ll have to see about the .338. I think that Reflex makes a suppressor, the T8M - 338 Lapua Mag, but I don’t know if I can get one.”

The North American supplier for Reflex Suppressors was a Canadian firm. Sandy sent them an email using only ‘T8M-338’ in the body of the message. They replied just as cryptically, \$465. God Bless VISA. There was no mail service, yet, but UPS was back in business. A week later, she received a plain brown package labeled, ‘Repair Parts.’ She made the installations and notified Gary that he should come by and bring money. From reading those articles, it seemed that the US was fine until Congress overreacted to gangsters using submachine guns and silencers and passed the NFA and created the ATF. And, of course, the states with high population densities had the most perverse of the state laws, like CA and NY just to name a couple.

“What do I owe you?” Gary asked.

“Make it \$1,500,” Sandy said, “That covers shipping and gives me about a dimes worth of profit.”

“How quiet are the rifles?” Gary asked.

“Given the range they’ll be used at, quiet enough,” Sandy replied.

Gary returned to the tract with the weapons and gave them back to Derek. Later that day, he got into a conversation with Ron.

“You know what, partner, I’m scared.” Gary said.

“We’re all a little scared, Gar-Bear, it just the times,” Ron replied.

“Not like that, Ron. This is scared to the core, scared,” Gary continued. “I think it started

in the fall of 2003. That's when I found out Derek was going to Kosovo. It's easy when it's you that's going off to war, but it's different when it's your kid."

"What do you mean, different?" Ron asked.

"Take that Vietnam Memorial, for example," Gary said. "I have friends and relatives whose names are on that wall. It's part of life and you just accept it, no matter how bitter it is. But, when I found out Derek was going to Kosovo, about the only thing I was happy about was that he wasn't going to Iraq. Man, I started to sweat. Then, he wasn't there a month and TSHTF. That was maybe April of 2004. A couple of the Iowa Guardsmen got medals out of that event. And I know he got home ok, but then I sat afraid they might turn right around and send him to Iraq."

"If he's in the Guard, that's the risk he takes," Ron said.

"I know, Ron, but it doesn't make it any easier," Gary said. "Always afraid that some Serb or Muslim or someone would dust his butt. I guess I never got over being scared after that. Man, I don't know how to explain it."

"He's here now and safe," Ron pointed out.

"Yeah, until we send them out on a mission to hit those UN people, he's safe," Gary said, "But what then? It will be those same old worries all over again. And, like I said, I haven't gotten over the last time."

"Gary," Clarence interrupted, "That's just the way of things."

"Why is it always our kids, fellas?" Gary asked.

"I suppose because we're too old to fight anymore," Clarence replied. "Our eyes are bad and the hearing is shot. We don't have the physical stamina to fight, it's as simple as that."

"Yeah, but we have years of being underhanded and sneaky and lying," Gary said, "That experience has to count for something."

"It does count for something Gar-Bear," Ron suggested, "It puts us in a position of getting the things that the young people need to fight things like tyranny and oppression."

"That's not what I mean and you know it," Gary said.

"I know it Gar-Bear," Ron admitted, "But you put your time in same as a lot of people. If you were 2 years younger, you would have ended up in Southeast Asia instead of college in the late 1960's. There are just some things that we choose and some things that God chooses for us. We don't get to choose when we are born. The only choice we have is how we choose to live our life. Maybe we could have done better and maybe

not.”

“Amen,” Clarence added. “Every time you get behind the wheel of a car you take your life in your hands. Even if you drive defensively, there’s always the other guy. There is a finite limit on how prepared you can be. When it comes to survival preparedness, the limiting factor is usually money. Just be glad you don’t live in someplace like Florida where they have Hurricanes.”

“Yeah,” Gary said, “Or California where they have earthquakes or Iowa where they have tornados, huh?”

“Partner, when your number is up, it’s up,” Ron said, “And if it isn’t, it isn’t.”

“That’s an awfully fatalistic view of life,” Gary countered.

“Prove I’m wrong,” Ron said.

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Philosophy (Greek Φιλοσοφία, love of wisdom) is the study of the ultimate reality, causes, and principles underlying being and thinking. It is often referred to as the works of major philosophers collectively; it can mean the academic exploration of various questions raised by philosophers; it can also mean a certain critical, creative way of thinking, and none of these meanings can be considered distinctly. Philosophy, in brief, has several connotations in common speech. Just knowing that didn’t help Gary deal with the uncertainties of life nor did it prepare him for whatever life would bring. Being fatalistic was just one of many philosophies and it wasn’t any better or worse than any of the others. Maybe being fatalistic helped Ron deal with life, but it didn’t help Gary. As a child, Gary had worried about his parents growing old and dying, and it hadn’t changed anything. They got old and died.

Now, he was getting old and would one day die. But like every parent, Gary was concerned not with the natural scheme of things where one gets old and dies but rather when one was young and died. Gary realized that if he did his role very, very well and provided Derek, for example, with the best tools and best skills, he had done all that he could do to see that Derek outlived him. After that, it was up to God to choose the times and places where ‘fate’ had its say. What if that bullet that hit him in the thigh had been 18” higher? It wasn’t about living and dying after all. It was all about how you lived your life.

“Derek, this isn’t about dying for your country,” Gary said when he sent Derek out on that first mission. “Now I want you to remember that no SOB ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb SOB die for his country.”

“Dad, Patton didn’t say that,” Derek argued, “It was only in the movie.”

“He actually said, ‘The object of war is not to die for your country, but to make the other bastard die for his.’ But would you rather I say, ‘A man must know his destiny... if he does not recognize it, then he is lost. By this I mean, once, twice, or at the very most, three times, fate will reach out and tap a man on the shoulder... if he has the imagination, he will turn around and fate will point out to him what fork in the road he should take, if he has the guts, he will take it’.” Gary said, “Patton said that. Or how about, ‘It’s the unconquerable soul of man, not the nature of the weapon he uses, that insures victory’.”

“I’d rather you just say ‘I’ll see you later’,” Derek replied.

“See you later kid and keep your powder dry,” Gary smiled.

Derek and the others returned later, their mission successful. That .50 caliber with API was a fearsome weapon. Between it and the rockets and the grenades, some of those UN folk’s families would get the dreaded notification, rather than some American families. There wouldn’t be any tears in Palmdale that night, they would come in a few days’ time when the poor dumb SOB’s family got the news in France or Germany or Russia or somewhere else. Their son or daughter, who had volunteered for the armed forces of his or her country to protect that country from invaders on his or her home soil, not to hassle some Americans over a gun law, would be another victim of a political agenda. Not his agenda, but some politicians agenda; perhaps some politician who would be King. And Milosevic had claimed the trial was a sham. Yeah, right, that’s how it was with politicians, lawyers and reporters.

Gary didn’t show this side of himself very often; most people would think he was unpatriotic. Was it unpatriotic to worry about your kids? Probably not. Was it unpatriotic to only approve of a defensive war? Patton haunted Gary on this point with his:

Live for something rather than die for nothing.

*So as through a glass, and darkly
The age long strife I see
Where I fought in many guises,
Many names, but always me.*

*And I see not in my blindness
What the objects were I wrought,
But as God rules o’er our bickerings
It was through His will I fought.*

*So forever in the future,
Shall I battle as of yore,
Dying to be born a fighter,
But to die again, once more.*

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 24 – The Worry Factor

The closing lines of *Through a Glass, Darkly* by Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. were used in the movie. Patton also said, *No sane man is unafraid in battle, but discipline produces in him a form of vicarious courage.* Derek didn't view the situation the same way as his father. He might, if it was his kid going off to fight, but it wasn't. And Derek was 'Gung-Ho', too. Considering that he was ex-Army and not ex-Marine Corps, which was quite the definition.

They'd had a good night attacking the UN forces. Although they had no confirmed body count, the UN force protecting Bouquet Canyon was in disarray. Derek had spent those 6 months in Kosovo and, although he didn't realize it at the time, had picked up a lot of lessons about how to mess with UN forces. Derek had made a fair number of friends among the soldiers from other nations during those 6 months, too. Perhaps this explained why although the disruption was disabling, they had no confirmed body count of UN Forces. The UN equipment was thoroughly disabled and there probably was some collateral damage, but those were the fortunes of war.

To avoid creating a discernable pattern of activity, they had written the names of locations they intended to assault on slips of paper and placed them in one borrowed cowboy hat. A second borrowed hat held slips of paper with a number 1 through 5 written on it. The second slip told them how long they were to wait before the attack on the next target. Given his fresh military experience, it fell to Derek to organize and lead the raids. All 3 of the rifles recovered from Mesa were bolt-action, single-shot rifles and were custom built. Each had proven itself capable of shooting sub-MOA groups with match ammo. Since The Three Amigos brought the previous owner's ammo, Derek had ammo that was matched to the rifles. The scopes were the latest thing and high quality optics. All 3 rifles had a variable power scope that ran up to 20X and MUNS night vision.

"The next target is the UN Camp on the road south of Lake Hughes in 4 days," Derek said reading the two slips he'd drawn.

"Where's the UN Camp," Gary asked.

"Overlooking some lake," Derek replied.

"Let me see the map," Gary asked. "Hey, I know this road. I used to drive it to get to 101 back 40 years or so. I don't know how much it has changed, but it's a winding mountain road with a lot of good ambush sites. You boys be careful traveling down that road."

"Would you quit worrying, Dad," Derek said, "We'll be ok."

"I can't help it son, it just goes with being a father," Gary explained.

"When we get an easy target, I'm going to drag your gimpy butt along with us," Derek said. "Then, once you see that everyone knows what they're doing maybe you'll quit

worrying.”

“I’d just slow you down Derek and I have no doubts about peoples’ abilities,” Gary replied. “Besides, it wouldn’t do anything to keep me from worrying. There’s always Murphy’s Law, you know. And don’t worry about me worrying. That’s a father’s job so his son is free to go do what he must.”

“I wish the 3 of you were younger,” Derek said, “It might be fun to watch you in action.”

“Nah, you wouldn’t like that son, we’d be more likely to shoot someone in the back than risk a face-to-face confrontation,” Gary remarked. “After we screwed the pooch on the Library Raid and got our butts shot up, we got careful. We shoot them when they’re down and then wait to approach them.”

Mt. Weather...

“What do you mean Vice-President Edwards is dead?” Kerry screamed. “He is, was, a young man.”

“John, I’ll be damned if I know what happened to him,” Hillary said. “Anyway, you need to appoint a new Vice President under the 25th Amendment and I know just the woman for the job.”

“What, do you think I’m nuts Hillary?” Kerry replied. “I make you Vice-President and I’m probably a dead man, too.”

“Are you implying that I had something to do with John’s death?” Hillary snapped. “Listen Mr. President, I’ve got the votes tied up for my confirmation so you just get to nominating.”

Although he was convinced that he was signing his own death warrant, Kerry nominated Hillary when he found out she had the necessary votes to confirm her appointment to the Vice Presidency. The UN had proven to be far too intrusive into the internal affairs of the US, but that’s what you get when you make a bargain with the Devil. Kerry was right in his suspicions about Madam Hillary and didn’t know that she had been working closely with several top UN officials. Although the UN Building in New York had been destroyed, the UN just reorganized itself and opened a new headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Elsewhere...

The military was winning the war against the UN, but it was a slow process. The President controlled the PAL codes for the nuclear weapons in the military’s possession and the way the bombs and warheads were built, it was essentially impossible to circumvent the protection scheme. Had that not been the case, the war with the UN would have been over before it ever started. But with the F series PAL’s the nuclear weapons were

useless to the military. In the early days, a PAL could be defeated by a Boy Scout with his trusty knife. But with the digital revolution, the warheads and bombs had been retrofitted and couldn't be exploded without the 12-digit/character PAL code and input from external environmental sensors.

But with the destruction of the French and Germany factories, the tide began to turn for the American military. That they were being helped by a whole lot of civilians who didn't follow any rules of war didn't hurt either.

24Mar07...

On the day after his 64th birthday, Gary felt like "Big John", another day older and deeper in debt. He had made his mind up that The Three Amigos were going to have one last hurrah, providing he could talk Ron and Clarence into it. Well, maybe not the last, but a big hurrah, nonetheless. That led to the nightmare conversation.

"I don't know if I want to go out a mission or not," Ron responded to Gary's suggestion.

"We can take 50th East to Avenue M," Gary started.

"They call that Columbia Way now," Ron interrupted.

"And we can take that to 10th Street East," Gary tried to continue.

"They call that Challenger Way, Gar-Bear," Ron again interrupted.

"And we can take that to Space Shuttle Avenue," Gary said, trying to be a smartass.

"Don't recollect a street named Space Shuttle Avenue," Ron said.

"They used to call it Avenue I," Gary snapped.

"Still do," Ron replied.

"Anyway, we'll go up to Tehachapi and do a little fooling around and then come back to Palmdale and exit 10th Street West and turn on Avenue P," Gary finished the general outline.

"They call that Rancho Vista, now," Ron said.

"Call what Rancho Vista, 10th or P?" Gary growled.

"Avenue P, but only to 40th Street East, after that it's still Avenue P," Ron explained.

"That doesn't make any sense, Ron. It's only another mile to 50th East and Avenue P ends." Gary said. "Why'd they do that?"

“Ran out of money for signs?” Ron snickered. “How the hell should I know why the City Council does anything?”

“When we going on this adventure of yours?” Clarence asked.

“Whenever you want Clarence,” Gary said thinking he had an ally in Clarence.

“We can’t go tomorrow ‘ cause it’s Sunday,” Clarence said.

“Ok, there’s Monday,” Gary suggested.

“Can’t go Monday, I have an appointment for a haircut,” Ron said.

“Hmm. Well we can’t go Wednesday,” Gary said, “Because I have an appointment for outpatient open heart surgery.”

“Where are you having it done?” Clarence asked. “Course, it will take you a day to heal up Gary, so that let’s Thursday out, too.”

“Right Clarence, a whole day?” Gary responded, “Never mind, I’ll just go alone.”

“You can’t drive,” Ron said.

“Why not?” Gary asked.

“Because you don’t have a driver’s license,” Ron insisted.

“Yes I do,” Gary said, “It was manufactured by H&K.”

“Ron, we’d better stop toying with Gary afore he gets po’d,” Clarence suggested.

“I don’t want to use your dang jack anyway,” Gary said.

[Old joke about a guy with a flat tire, without a jack, on a country road $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a lit up farmhouse. At $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on the way to the house the guys thinks, maybe he doesn’t have a jack. At $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, he thinks, maybe he has a jack and won’t lend it to me. Near the farmhouse, the guy thinks maybe he won’t answer the door. Guy knocks on the door, Farmer says, ‘Hi, can I help you?’ and the guys says, ‘I didn’t want to use your dang jack anyway.’ Thinking about some things too much can lead to trouble.]

So, the boys were going to Tehachapi and mess with the UN contingent that was blocking 58 to Bakersfield. The Three Amigos weren’t going to use 58 to get there either. There was a ‘back way’ into Tehachapi on old route 202. They planned the mission carefully, taking their Super Match rifles and M1911’s. For backup, they slung the MP-5’s. Gary wanted to try some sniping and had spent a lot of time lately on the range. He

was, with all the extra practice, able to shoot about 1½-MOA. The UN, according to what they'd heard around town, had 58 blocked with some Russian armored personnel carriers. They ignored the UN imposed curfew and set out late at night, driving without headlights. It was back roads all the way and if there hadn't been some moonlight they'd have never made it.

Derek waited 10 minutes for The Three Amigos to leave and he had Mary's pickup. Damon and another 10 residents were piled in the truck and the 12 men were loaded for bear. Chris had made a pedestal to mount a Ma-Deuce in the bed of the pickup. It took all of 5-minutes to bolt it in place and head out after the 3 old men. The ammo boxes were filled with API and APIT in the usual 4 to 1 ratio. And all 12 of them had M16/M203's and they'd tossed a couple of AT-4's in the bed of the pickup, just in case. The shoe was on the other foot, but instead of worrying about it, Derek did the sensible thing and just covered their backs.

Derek had an advantage, too. The Three Amigos might not be using headlights, but they'd forgotten to remove the bulbs from the back light fixtures in Ron's car and every once in a while they'd spot brake lights or a turn signal. Chris had wired in switches in Mary's pickup so you could disable the lighting circuits from the cab before they ever started their missions against the UN. And, Ron was driving pretty slowly, so it was easy to keep The Three Amigos in sight. The problem with The Three Amigos, in Derek's opinion, was that they watched too many of those John Wayne movies.

When they slipped into Tehachapi, Ron drove to a site overlooking the UN roadblock. The Three Amigos got out, unlimbered their Super Match rifles and began to snipe the UN forces. They got about 6 of the Russian soldier's before the Russians realized they were under fire and took cover. The Russians officer had guessed where they had to be sniping from and his remaining troops had The Three Amigos pinned down, unable to move. Derek and the 'reserves' arrived and between the .50 cal and their 40mm grenades, brought the situation to an abrupt end.

"Well, I think we've had enough fun for this year," Gary said, grateful to be alive.

"It's humiliating to have to be rescued," Ron said.

"It might be humiliating Ron," Clarence countered, "But at least we're alive."

The API and the APIT had chewed up the thin armor of the Russian vehicles, disabling them temporarily or perhaps even permanently. The Three Amigos got in the car, and took off, this time using the headlights. While there was a danger of being spotted if a UN helicopter happened to be in the area, The Three Amigos didn't care; they just wanted to get back to Moon Shadows as quickly as possible. Ron even let Gar-Bear drive; Gary had a lead foot, to be sure. Gary also had his H&K driver's license slung on one shoulder so Ron figured it might be okay, just this one time. They made it from Tehachapi to Moon Shadows in 50-minutes, compared to the hour and a half it had taken Ron to get there in the first place. Mary's pickup couldn't keep up and it arrived back

at Moon Shadows almost 15-minutes after The Three Amigos.

They decided to call the venture off after their near disaster and returned to Moon Shadows. Gar-Bear had gotten a severe cold and was reduced to lying in bed on oxygen trying to beat the cold. Sharon had to go somewhere with a friend and Gary was in bed sleeping with the oxygen. Through some 6th sense, Sharon got Patti to check on Gary around lunchtime and Patti found Gary's breathing labored and he was cyanotic. Patti called Sharon's friend to rush Sharon home and Sharon suggested that the tired old man go to the doctor. Old Mr. Macho wasn't going to have any part that foolishness and told Sharon to forget it, he'd live.

Sharon wasn't having any part of that nonsense and she called Dr. J. Dr. J said to bring Gary to the office. Sharon's car was in the shop and when she told J the good news, he told her to call an ambulance and put Gar in AV Hospital. Good choice. Gary would have never made it to LA. After what could only be described as an adventure beyond belief, Gary escaped from the hospital on his 3rd attempt. Saved by a broken sparkplug wire.

Upon hearing of Gar-Bear's near demise, a rich guy, Bill somebody, hired Gary to set up a new hospital to provide affordable, quality medical treatment in Palmdale to provide medical care for the poor and uninsured as a charitable activity for his and his wife foundation. The name of the new hospital would be The Citadel.

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 25 – The War Heats Up

John Kerry, being a New Englander was fond of shellfish. There was always a danger eating shellfish of PSP poisoning. After the appointment of Madam Hillary as the new VP to replace Edwards, Kerry had been especially careful when he ate shellfish, insisting that the cooking staff eat some of the shellfish before he did. Paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) is a serious illness caused by eating shellfish that have consumed large amounts of a poison-producing microscopic organism called *Alexandrium catenella*. The *Alexandrium* toxins are extremely potent nerve poisons; in fact, as little as one milligram (0.000035 ounce) is enough to kill an adult. The poisons themselves, as well as the illness they cause, are referred to as PSP. The poison acts very rapidly, and no antidote has as yet been discovered. The toxin is not affected by freezing or cooking.

Hillary knew of this and also knew that the CIA had maintained stocks of shellfish toxin for years. Advances in medical equipment had led companies like BD to produce insulin syringes with tiny little 31-gauge needles only 8mm long. Gary, for one, used that very syringe for his insulin injections. But a little Monica Lewinsky-like behavior got Hillary a syringe of the toxin and someone to deliver the package. The next time they had shellfish on the menu, John Kerry got a little more PSP than he'd allowed for. And, the injection site was so small that the autopsy failed to reveal the dastardly deed. Fleataxi was probably happy now, his favorite woman, the Wicked Witch, was in power. Not wishing to disturb the balance of the new Presidency, Hillary selected Senator Barbara Boxer from California as her new Vice President.

Moon Shadows...

"Jeez," Ron said turning off the TV. "We got 2 of 'em in office. This country could be in real trouble if it's the wrong time of the month for both of them."

"Real trouble?" Clarence growled not his usual cheerful self, "What you call what we already got?"

"We're winning the war on terror, Clarence," Gary said, "And we aren't doing so bad on the UN, either. By the way, Derek and the guys are going out tonight on another mission."

"Remind me to stay away from you until they get back," Ron said, "Man you should triple up on the Xanax when Derek goes out on a mission."

"I can't Ron," Gary said, "I'm down to my last 5,000 pills."

"That's a 13-year supply Gar-Bear," Ron said, "We can find you more. Take 3, they're small and who says we're going to live another 13-years?"

"I'm going to live forever," Gary smiled, "Somebody has to worry about Derek. And, at least I have boys worth worrying about."

The remark came right out of left field, and it stung Ron. Ron was used to Gary's outbursts, but this time, old Gar-Bear had gone just a little too far. Neither man had raised the majority of children in question. Ron's ex-wife had raised Scott and she hadn't done too good a job of it. Joyce had raised Damon and Derek and had earned fair marks for Damon and good marks for Derek. Ron had raised Kevin, but Kevin's type-I diabetes had led to an outrageously codependent mother and Kevin's ruination. Neither of the women in Ron's life had really allowed him to influence the 2 boys. But, Ron had a thick skin and he shrugged off the crack. And, Gary took 3 Xanax when he realized he'd put his foot in his mouth.

The UN had 2 choices when it came to dealing with the Antelope Valley. They could pull troops from other areas and attempt to beat the residents into submission. In the alternative, they could withdraw the troops and use them elsewhere where they were much needed. They chose wisely and pulled their troops. Thus when Derek and company went out on the next mission, there was no UN to attack. They took it as a victory and on their return to Moon Shadows began to plan even further ranging activities.

"Where is that Underground City you wrote about in one of your stories?" Derek asked Gary.

"I'm not exactly sure Derek," Gary said, "But if I got the directions right, it's right about here," he said pointing to the map of California. "What do you want to know that for?"

"We need a forward operating base," Derek explained.

"The borax mine is stocked in Boron," Ron pointed out. "Can you use that?"

"It's not far enough out Ron," Derek declined. "With the UN pulling back from southern California, we either go north into the San Joaquin Valley, northeast in the direction of Vegas or east close to the Arizona state line."

"Surely our efforts aren't responsible for them pulling," Gary observed.

"They probably didn't hurt," Clarence suggested.

"I think that it's a combination of things fellas," Derek explained. "We made it difficult for them, that's all. But the military has been kicking butt and taking names and I think that it's just them consolidating their forces more than anything else."

"Instead of locating a new base of operations, Derek, why don't you create a light mobile force and stay on the move?" Gary asked.

"We could do that," Derek agreed, "But only if we were assured a source of fuel."

"There are those extra fuel tanks that Randy put in," Clarence pointed out, "If'n you

could find a fuel trailer or truck; you could use that fuel.”

“Most of the vehicles are gasoline,” Derek stated, “Randy put in diesel fuel.”

“Well son,” Gary leaned back with his hands behind his head, “We’ll just have to get some diesel powered vehicles for you to use. You can take our pickup for a start and pull the Airstream. Randy put in diesel because he bought a diesel pickup; maybe you can use his vehicle. And we can canvas the town looking for abandoned diesel pickups.”

“It probably wouldn’t hurt to get Chris building another pedestal for a second Ma-Deuce,” Ron suggested.

“If we around go picking up used diesel pickups,” Derek said, “We will have no idea what condition they’ll be in. It could delay us for weeks while we get them all running right and ready for a long road trip.”

“Then have your brother borrow a few from the Palmdale auto mall,” Gary suggested. “And while you’re at it find some camper shells. You can get trailers from the mine in Boron that we put up there.”

Over the course of the next week, Damon borrowed a half dozen new diesel pickups, camper shells to fit them and they made a run to the mine in Boron to get trailers. Randy’s pickup was fitted with the second pedestal and the road trip began to come together. They found an abandoned Chevron tanker on I-14 and Chris was able to get it running. The front tank was full of gasoline but the trailer tank was empty. The gas was transferred and the truck mounted tank filled with the available diesel. An extra 12kw portable diesel generator was added to one of the pickups. They sorted through the food stores and made up bundles of food to take with them. They rounded up some 20-gallon bottles of propane and a propane cook top for their meals on wheels. Since none of the men were particularly good cooks, The Three Amigos ended up tagging along as the support group. Gary and Ron would handle the cooking and Clarence would keep tab on the supplies.

“Looks like you’re finally going to get a chance to pull KP, Ronald,” Gary laughed.

“That’s why I brought all of those paper plates and plastic silverware and glasses,” Ron explained. “We can burn them and I won’t have to wash them.”

The thing that Gary didn’t have was recipes suitable for about 24 people. A search of the net using the term ‘chuck wagon’ got him more recipes than he cared to try. It seemed strange to be able to surf the web when the country was in the middle of a revolution and had been invaded by the UN, but that was probably because a Democrat had invented the Internet. And, his inventing the Internet had probably been the only worthwhile thing he’d done in his entire life.

Perhaps to compensate for his gaff in Iraq, Geraldo was now passing along UN positions to the Patriots. Or, maybe that was just the man's nature. Back in 2004 they'd sent him to Florida to cover that hurricane named Frances and instead of giving weather reports, Geraldo had taken the opportunity to assail the manufactured housing industry. And now, our old pal couldn't help himself and much to the chagrin of the UN was detailing their locations. Maybe the boy just couldn't keep a secret. Or maybe, the boy just thought that he was the one to decide what the public needed to know and everyone else was wrong.

Because of the news reports, Derek had decided to skip the Underground City altogether. They simply wouldn't have any worthwhile targets from the Blythe area. When Derek announced that they were going to just play by ear and hit targets of opportunity, no one was satisfied.

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 26 – The Citadel

The B & M G Foundation, long involved in supplying 3rd world medical needs and computers to educate America's young decided to put a hospital in at Palmdale. The hospital was to be a totally philanthropic hospital servicing only the poor of Palmdale. Bill decided upon hearing of Ron and Gary's recent near death experiences to venture into the new field; he must have been a secret Frugal Squirrel. Gary, Ron and Clarence were funded with \$1 billion to build a completely state of the art hospital in Palmdale. Services would be rendered only to the poor and Medicare/MediCal patients. The hospital would provide total state of the art medical treatment and would accept Medicare and MediCal payments as payments in full for all treatment.

The first task facing The Three Amigos was to procure a medical staff to assist them in the design and equipping of the hospital. Ron's Cardiologist, Dr. E was the premier cardiologist in the AV. His partner, Dr. T was Clarence's cardiologist. Gary had his own cardiologist, Dr. P in Northridge. The 3 doctors were recruited to guide the new cardiology program at the Citadel and selecting the equipment. Gary's Gastroenterologist and Hepatologist in Grenada Hills had been responsible for introduction of the use of endoscopic and laparoscopic techniques in LA. Gary and Ron's eye surgeon was the #1 Ophthalmologist in the AV. Clarence's Neurologist, Dr. L, was the #1 guy in the AV. Gary's Dermatologist was a hot shot from Grenada Hills. To round out the team, Gary's family doctors, both Internalists and Emergency Medicine specialists, were recruited. The depth of the medical talent The Three Amigos used probably explained why they ever lived past 50. Gary's family physicians were Persians and close personal friends with Dr. T, the top LA neurosurgeon. Also, a pair of Pulmonary Specialists, Dr. K and Dr. S, both from Lancaster who were board certified Internalists certified in the treatment of pulmonary diseases and critical care. A long-term friend of Dr. N, one Dr. R, displaced due to the closure of Grenada Hills Hospital, was recruited to establish Radiology.

Back in 2003 when Gar-Bear had his great cancer scare, one of the examinations he received was made using a CT Scanner that combined an ultra sound. At that time there had been only one of the devices in Los Angeles. Dr. R immediately knew how he wanted to equip the Radiology Department. He wanted the combined CT/ultra sound and both a closed MRI and open MRI. Although open MRI's had become popular, the closed units had much higher resolutions. His new department would include the CT scanner, ultra scan and both MRIs. He recommended a Pathologist, also formerly from Granada Hills Hospital to operate the Laboratory Department. The lab was to be equipped with state of the art diagnostic equipment, too.

While a site was selected for the new hospital, an Architect and Engineer were engaged to design the facility within a narrow set of criteria specified by the Foundation. In view of the attacks against the US and the ongoing revolution, together with rumors the Foundation had heard about the two underground shelters in the Moon Shadows tract, the Foundation specified that the Citadel be a 6-story structure, with 3 stories above ground and 3 below ground. At the time it was built, the Banker's Trust Building in

downtown Des Moines, Iowa was the tallest 'weathering steel' building west of the Mississippi. The 36-story building was sheathed in weathering steel that in time rusted giving the building a distinctive brown metal color. Affectionately known as Banker's Rust, the building was of the style of other Bankers Trust weathering steel buildings in New York City that had withstood the 9/11/01 WTC attacks especially well.

An additional consideration for the building was that Palmdale lay on the San Andreas Fault. Those 2 factors alone supported the Foundation's choice for a weathering steel building. The Foundation wanted more and the building had a secondary purpose, that of being a shelter. Consequently, while The Three Amigos located a building site for approval, the Foundation chose the engineering features of the building. Although sheathed in a 1½" steel sheet, the building was to be of the old-fashioned skyscraper construction popular in NYC for years, steel frame construction. And, those shelters of Gary and Randy's influenced the Foundation to design and build a hermetically sealed, Constant Positively Pressurized hospital environment, essentially creating a 'clean room' atmosphere. Imagine the challenge. The Architect was into reinforced concrete construction in a major way, allowing the Citadel to be constructed as a steel encased, concrete reinforced cube.

Although the Palmdale Hospital had closed in the mid 1990's, plans by Lancaster Community Hospital to build a new hospital in Palmdale had never materialized. In the 15 years between the late 1980's and the early 2000's the Antelope Valley had lost 2 of its 4 hospitals. The second hospital to close was the Los Angeles County High Desert Hospital. During the same time, the population in the AV had at least quadrupled. AV Hospital had been a Trauma Center and Lancaster Community was (is) an outstanding cardiac care facility. Although the Trauma Center was now technically gone, AV Hospital retained the role but without Los Angeles County sponsorship. And, if you had heart problems, go to Community if you wanted to live.

As the doctors began to make their equipment selections it seemed apparent that they'd spend the whole billion on equipment if allowed free rein. However, when called to task, they pointed out that the inherent advantages of their selections would reduce staffing and provide 'better diagnoses'.

"What I can't understand is why they have to buy Cadillac's instead of Chevy's," Clarence grouched.

"You're absolutely right partner," Ron chuckled, "We'll even skip buying a defibrillator and just use an extension cord plugged into an outlet instead. We can save thousands."

"You know Clarence, I once visited the company who invented the portable defibrillator and saw the very first one they built," Gary added. "Dr. K. William Edmark, a cardiovascular surgeon determined to reduce the number of sudden deaths during cardiac surgery, founded Physio-Control Corporation in 1955. His research, showing that a very brief electrical current could correct an abnormal heart rhythm, led to the development of the first commercial defibrillator. Building on Dr. Edmark's discovery, Physio-Control

dramatically changed the face of emergency medical care. In 1972, Physio-Control introduced the LIFEPAK 2 defibrillator/monitor, designed for use in hospitals as well as the nation's new emergency vehicle program. This defibrillator/monitor was the first portable defibrillator to allow transmission of the patient's ECG (electrocardiogram) signals by telephone. But, if you want to take a chance, we can get an extension cord for about \$2. As for having both an open and a closed MRI and a ultra sound equipped CT scanner, we'll just skip those and buy a used X-Ray machine from some retiring doctor."

"I told you not to put so much chili powder in the beans," Clarence said, "Probably made you sweat and you caught cold and ended up in the hospital."

"Huh?" Gary stared.

"He's just changing the subject because we made fun of him," Ron laughed.

"I was dead serious," Gary said, "It's the two of you with the bad hearts. But, we can save a couple of thousand if you'd prefer. Besides, it's doctors who kill everyone anyway."

"How do you figure that?" Ron asked.

"Easy. According to California law you aren't dead until a doctors says so," Gary pointed out. "I therefore conclude that nobody would die unless a doctor killed them."

"Are you nuts?" Clarence asked.

"While I was in the hospital, my brother-in-law dropped dead," Gary explained. "His doctor refused to sign the death certificate. Consequently, until the Kern County Coroner did an autopsy and signed a death certificate, he wasn't legally dead."

"Was he breathing?" Clarence asked.

"Nope," Gary replied.

"Was his heart beating?" Clarence pressed.

"Nope," Gary again replied.

"Sounds dead to me," Clarence insisted.

"Just because you're not breathing, your heart is stopped and you have zero brain activity doesn't make you dead," Gary pursued his tease. "In California, there's only one way to be sure you're really dead."

"What's that?" Ron asked.

“When your wife receives the check from the insurance company,” Gary laughed.

The Foundation approved the proposed site for the Citadel at 40th Street East and Palmdale Boulevard. One of two sites originally picked by Lancaster Community Hospital for the new Palmdale Hospital, The Three Amigos picked the location because it was within walking distance in case they had a heart attack or got shot. At least, that’s what they told everyone. The first phase of construction was to dig a 400’x400’x50’ deep hole for the foundation and below ground level portion of the building. Once the excavation was completed, a well digger was lowered into the hole by crane and the deep water well was dug.

Underground lines were put in for utilities and the foundation and basement floor were poured. Because The Three Amigos and their families had survived the 11/12/05 attacks in a cramped little shelter, they weren’t interested in building small and the building would contain 960,000 square feet of floor space. Maybe they were overreacting a little, but the Citadel certainly wouldn’t be cramped. The actual location of the hospital is 38600 Medical Center Drive, which isn’t on Microsoft Maps.

A late breaking report on the Communist News Network (CNN) indicated that a Republican Senator had accused Madam President of murdering both Edwards and later, Kerry. Dan Rather at CBS insisted that Hillary couldn’t possibly be guilty of such a thing and produced a memo written a year before Kerry died attesting that Hillary was of ‘good moral character’ and incapable of murder. Several Republicans claimed the memo was a forgery. Did Dubya really mess around in the Guard causing him to lose the 2004 election or had it really been a secret campaign by the Swift Boat folks all along? Did anyone really care either way? The only thing you could be sure of was that Kerry had given back someone’s medals, Jane had gone to Hanoi and Kerry had confessed to committing atrocities but had refused to say what they were. And, Dubya hadn’t pushed for the AWB so The Three Amigos figured he was ok in their book.

And all the while, Gar-Bear was milking Medicare for all it was worth. (Tongue in cheek.) Medicare only paid for 80% of the cost of diabetic testing supplies, e.g., test strips and lances, but they would pay 100% of the cost of a Nebulizer and the Albuterol the doctor wanted Gary to use but failed to prescribe. Liberty Medical advertised on TV that they would sell you the diabetic supplies and bill Medicare for you. Trouble was that they marked the stuff up so high that the 20% cost Medicare didn’t cover equaled 50% of the cost of the supplies over the counter. And the shipping and handling charges were ridiculous.

The sitar-playing doctor had put old Gar-Bear on insulin, but he already had insulin. He had also put the tired old man on Prednisone so he could develop osteoporosis and Prevacid, 30mg QD, even though it cost \$5 a pill and Gary had no insurance. Gary got around that by sucking up to Drs. E and N and getting physician’s samples. Gary didn’t have any stomach problems either and had only used Prevacid in the past for GERD. Prevacid, generic name Lansoprazole, decreases the amount of acid produced in the stomach. Lansoprazole is used to treat and prevent stomach and intestinal ulcers, ero-

sive esophagitis (damage to the esophagus from stomach acid), and other conditions involving excessive stomach acid such as Zollinger-Ellison syndrome.

Go figure. Must be that stomach acid caused asthma. Gary finally figured it out. Prednisone, the corticosteroid he didn't want to take, could also cause ulcers and the Prevacid was to prevent him from getting an ulcer. Of course Medicare paid 100% of the cost of all asthma inhalers so naturally the doc couldn't prescribe one of those instead of the Prednisone and Prevacid. Maybe doctors were related to lawyers, reporters and politicians. Gary had a new candidate for his enemies list, doctors, the only people officially allowed to kill you in California. Prednisone is now over the counter and less expensive. However, it only comes in 15mg capsules.

"Man, I hope that we never really do get sick," Gary said to Ron.

"Why's that partner?" Ron asked.

"It would be giving the doctors a license to kill," Gary laughed.

"They already have one of those Gar-Bear," Ron laughed, "It's called a medical license."

The Three Amigos Part II – Revolution – Chapter 27 – License to Kill

Mt. Weather...

“Do you believe this crap, Babs?” Hillary remarked, “That Senator is saying I killed Kerry.”

“So, what’s the big deal?” Boxer asked, “You killed both of the SOB’s didn’t you?”

“Yeah, but I thought I’d covered my tracks better than that,” Madam President observed.

“No biggie girl,” Barbara said, “When the Republicans introduce the resolution for an investigation, we’ll get Diane to filibuster it.” (A demotion from Senator to Representative?)

“Yeah, huh? That’s a good idea,” Hillary replied. “She’s long winded enough.”

“Yeah and she never says anything either,” Barbara chuckled.

“I’ve got to be going,” Hillary said, “Got a hot date tonight.”

“Oh? Anyone special?” Barbara asked.

“You don’t know her,” Hillary cut off the discussion.

“I want to make a suggestion, if you can take a minute,” Barbara said.

“What’s on your mind?” Hillary asked.

“The UN is getting its butt royally kicked and because the UN is in the US, we never retaliated against the terrorists who started this whole mess in the first place,” Barbara said. “You know how poorly my people and the Muslims get along anyway. What I want to know is if you intend to give those ragheads a free ride?”

“Well, we wouldn’t want to po the UN,” Hillary said. “What exactly did you have in mind?”

“Hillary, we have 20 B-2 bombers each capable of carrying 16 1.2-megaton B-83 nukes,” Barbara grinned, “I want some A-Rab butt!”

“What about the Russians?” Hillary asked.

“We can save the other 284 B-83’s for the Russians,” Babs said, “And don’t forget, we have the Minutemen and the Tridents.”

“Gee Barbara, I don’t know about this,” Hillary said. “Let me give it some thought.”

It appeared to Boxer that Hillary's cojones were about the size of Kerry's. The only difference was that Hillary had an excuse. And in her mind, Barbara finally realized why being President was such a risky job. She decided to check with HER friends at the CIA and see if they had any shellfish toxin left. If she worked it right, she could eliminate Hillary, nuke the A-Rabs and resign, all in a good afternoon. Besides, Hillary had already been President for 8 years and was going for 16.

On Creation...

Not to challenge anyone's belief system, but I've got to tell you that even God can have a bad day. God really pushed on the Universe Project and got it done in less than a week. But, he was tired one day and overlooked the fact that He had created a pretty complicated life for man. And then there was that whole tree thing. According to Chapter 2 of Genesis, God planted 2 trees in the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Must have been fatigue, but that was His bad. And, it wasn't a bad looking tree either. Rather than mess up his Garden, God decided to leave the good looking tree and tell man not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Overall, God was pretty satisfied with the project and decided to create a companion for man. He created woman as a companion and called him Adam and her Eve. I have it good authority the Eve was a blonde. Anyway, the snake talked Eve into eating the apple and the rest is history. One little mistake!

Then it really went south on God. He couldn't just let man get away with disobeying, so he kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden lest they eat from the Tree of Life. The snake received even worse punishment, but let's face it God couldn't make rules for man and not enforce them. Anyway, Adam and Eve had a couple of sons, Cain and Abel. The boys both gave offerings to God and God sort of took a hankering to the gift from Abel. We all know that this really po'd Cain and he killed his brother. Now it gets a little complicated here so bear with me. God created Adam and Eve and they created Cain and Abel. The Bible fails to mention God creating any other people, but Cain married a woman from the Land of Nod. Hmm, where did she come from? God wasn't as pleased as He had been, so He decided to give man a break in the form of certainties; however, He left these certainties for man to discover on his own. An example of one of the certainties is, "How can you tell if a politician is lying? His lips are moving!"

Anyway, that's why we're not all nudists. This other debate we sometimes hear about is the controversy over Creationism versus Evolution. Never really ever heard anyone say God didn't do it, but people sure could argue about how He'd gone about it. You can find the story about all of this in a book called The Bible, all 100 or so versions of it. There weren't enough people to lead, so God used the leftover politician types as lawyers and reporters. And, if you could believe Gar-Bear, maybe some doctors.

Boxer's contact at the CIA had some leftover shellfish toxin and all she had to do was figure out how to feed it to her fearless leader, Hillary. Nobody ever figured out how she'd pulled it off, but Babs gave Hillary a dose of her own medicine. The B-2's were

already airborne when Babs was sworn in and she transmitted the PAL codes to the B-2's. Except for the 40 pilots and the ground crews, no one had a clue about the operation until the bombs started falling. The way I heard the story, Putin called Babs up and threatened to retaliate. She told him to go for it, but every nuke in the US arsenal was targeted on Russia. On the other hand, if Putin would just keep his mouth shut, he could have the Middle East. Apparently Putin saw this as a way out of the growing problem between the US and Russia and accepted the offer. Babs announced that the job was proving to be too much for her and resigned, right after she ordered the UN out of the US.

Thus, the US found itself in the exact position, as it had been on 11/12/05, leaderless. The Speaker of the House, a Republican, automatically became the new President and he appointed the Senate Majority Leader as his Vice President. As it turned out, the New President was pro-gun and anti-USA Patriot Act. He rescinded all of the Executive Orders on the books and introduced legislation to repeal PA II and I. And, as quickly as the revolution began, it ended. Babs had dropped from sight and the Republicans decided that as long as she stayed lost, they'd drop the whole thing.

Palmdale...

"Man, I'll bet that was the shortest political career in history," Ron chuckled.

"Six hours wasn't very long, was it?" Clarence replied. "Say, there's something awfully familiar about the music you're playing, Ron, what's the name of that tune?"

"Oh, it's from the Wizard of Oz, Clarence," Ron said. "I think the title is *Ding Dong, the Witch is Dead.*"

"So, how are they coming on the Citadel?" Gary asked.

"They've erected the 3 underground floor frames and are installing the rebar," Ron replied. "Then, they'll install all of the backup systems in the lowest level and start pouring the walls and floors."

"Ron, I've been looking at all of these Architectural drawings and can't find the windows," Clarence commented, "Am I missing something?"

"Ain't no windows partner," Ron shook his head. "When this building is done, it will look just like a 400'x400'x50' brown steel box."

"I see, but where are the windows?" Clarence repeated his question.

"Clarence do you understand the concept of what we're creating here?" Gary asked.

"Yeah a brown steel box with no windows or doors," Clarence replied. "But how are we going to get in and out?"

“Through the doors, Clarence, of course,” Gary said.

“Well, if you ask me, it’s a pretty dumb idea to build a hermetically sealed hospital,” Clarence snapped.

“Why’s that Clarence?” Gary asked.

“You’ll be trapping all of those germs inside the building,” Clarence announced.

“Our air purification and filtration systems will use ultraviolet negative ionization and input filtration air purifiers. This system will be supplemented with a low level ozone production systems as required,” Ron explained. “The air will be exchanged at the rate exceeding 100% per hour. The Engineer says that this is the ultimate air purification system.”

“Sounds real healthy to me living inside of a box without sunlight,” Clarence groaned.

“So, what do you get from sunlight that we can’t produce with our lighting system design?” Ron asked.

“One of those vitamin thingies,” Clarence responded.

“The lighting systems produce a full light spectrum Clarence,” Ron explained, “That does even more to purify the atmosphere in the building.”

“Yeah right,” Clarence said. “And how do we get in and out again?”

“Fully automatic airlock,” Gary tried to explain.

“Are you sure the name of this place is the Citadel and not the Starship Enterprise?” Clarence persisted.

“I suppose we could change the name if you wanted, but Bill Shatner is busy trying to get his job back from Priceline.com,” Gary said. “You’re concentrating on the obvious and overlooking the more subtle problems with ‘living in a box’.”

“Like what?” Ron asked.

“We can create a physically healthier atmosphere inside the box than we live in,” Gary remarked. “However, that’s physically. Psychologically, it’s akin to living through a month long rainstorm. Did you ever notice how when the sun doesn’t shine for several days’ people get depressed? Thus no one is going to live inside of that box unless it’s brought into use as a shelter.”

“Let’s get back to our discussion about the bimbo,” Clarence suggested.

“Which bimbo?” Gary asked, “I’ve known so many.”

“Barbara Boxer,” Clarence replied.

“They ought to give her the Congressional Medal of Honor,” Gary chuckled.

“I think that they did, indirectly,” Ron grinned. “But now I’m curious about something.”

“Yes?” Clarence asked.

“Did we win the war on terror yet?” Ron asked.

“Can’t tell you partner,” Gary said, “But I think we finally won the Crusades.”

“What about the UN?” Clarence inquired.

“I’ll bite, Clarence, what about the UN?” Ron responded.

“Do you think that they’re going to leave peacefully?”

“CNN said the Russians were pulling out,” Gary observed. “And without the Russians to back them up, the French and Germans will probably run their mouths a bunch, but tuck tail and run.”

Had the boys been thinking clearly, they might not have been so certain about the Crusades. “This is a simple webpage to show the total Muslim population worldwide. We have gathered all the data from authentic sources and calculated the Muslim population in each countries and ultimately in the five continents.

“We also wanted to show that, by even taking data from General Sources, like CIA Fact Sheet, we can easily establish that fact that total Muslim Population in 2003 is 1.48 billion which is far greater than currently estimated 1.2 or 1.3 billion. Under general source section, we have taken all the data from popular sources such as CIA Fact Sheet, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, etc.

“We think that in some countries the total numbers of Muslims are more in percentage than shown in general sources, like in China and India. For all those few above cases Islamic Sources, news items and thought provoking articles came in great help. Our research shows that the total Muslim Population is 1.70 billion in year 2003.”

The Muslim population is roughly divided up between Africa 48.10%; Asia 26.39%; Europe 7.04%; North America 2.05%; South America 0.30% and Oceania 1.09%. Wiping out the Middle Eastern countries had eliminated less than half of the world’s Muslim population. The Three Amigos also overlooked the fact that the 9/11/01 plot had originated not in the Middle East, but in Indonesia. This Citadel of theirs might just come in

handy after all.

The UN outright refused, at first, to remove itself from the US. The new President ordered the 20 B-2's loaded with B-83's and invited the Secretary General and the German and French Ambassadors to the UN to Whiteman AFB. The 3 UN representatives were invited to inspect the weapons bays of the B-2's. When they had completed the inspection, the Secretary General told the Air Force on-scene commander that the US wouldn't dare do such a thing. The General smiled and said, "Sir the planes are scheduled for takeoff in 49 hours."

Although the planes were indeed loaded with B-83 bombs, the US only had 284 of the 1.2-megaton weapons left. The loads were rounded out with the 350-kiloton B-61-7's, but nobody had noticed. And nobody had to really assure the UN representatives that the US had the wherewithal to drop nukes because the Security Council was still debating Boxer's attack on the Middle East. The German's didn't even bother to give the matter lip service; they simply announced that the US mission had been successfully completed and began withdrawing their forces. All other participating nations, except for the French, simply began immediate withdrawals. The French pushed it right up to the 48-hour mark before announcing that their mission was complete.

In order to avoid problems with the Russians, the President had invited Russian representatives to be present at Whiteman during the UN inspection. As soon as the UN people left, the Russian observer noted that the US had unloaded the weapons as had been agreed in advance. Although the Americans and Russians had been 'at war' for 45 years until the Wall fell, neither of the two major world powers wanted a confrontation. The US had its share of troubles with terrorists, as had Russia. For all of its frivolity, the policy of MAD had always worked. Even Nikita had blinked when it came right down to testing the issue. My barracks was about 1.5 miles from those 12 loaded B-47's sitting in the shotgun area at Edwards. I think I went about 8 days without sleep.

Not everyone in the US feels that the country is under an obligation to export Democracy. Support, perhaps, but not export. Well some of us, anyway. Thus when Putin reacted far differently in 2004 in response to Russia's 9/11, the attack on the school, the US objections to his new policies were, for the most part, limited to political rhetoric. But, it's more fun to talk about the ragheads. Anyway, as I understand the Quran, a Jihad is a Holy War to repel invaders. Unfortunately, the Quran is a little like the Bible, different strokes for different folks. As I said earlier, the debate over Evolution and Creationism is about HOW He did it, not whether He did it. So, why do people debate Intelligent Design? I'll never claim that God isn't Intelligent!

And life does have its little uncertainties. Back in 2004, hurricane Ivan killed about 25 people, indirectly. It wasn't the category 4 winds that killed the people; it was the tornados and mudslides and other associated phenomena. Is it really that hard to keep 10-gallons of gas on hand and a couple of flashlights? And, why the rush to buy plywood? If I lived there, I expect that I'd hang on to the plywood for the next hurricane. Unless you think that we're going to stop having hurricanes. \$400-\$500 is a lot of money to

have sitting around in a small portable generator, too. On the other hand, some folks have more than \$500 worth of meat in their freezer.